



General Assembly

Emergency Special Session

33rd meeting

Thursday, 15 January 2009, 3 p.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. D'Escoto Brockmann. (Nicaragua)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Wolfe (Jamaica), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 5 (continued)

Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Draft resolution (A/ES-10/L.21)

The Acting President: I give the floor to the Permanent Representative of France in his capacity as President of the Security Council.

Mr. Ripert (France) (spoke in French): First, I should like to point out that my country fully supports the statement made by the Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union.

In Gaza we are now witnessing a new spiral of violence, which the Middle East has experienced all too often. The end of the truce between Hamas and Israel on 19 December resulted in an escalation of horror caused by rocket attacks, on the one hand, and a disproportionate military response, on the other.

As all of us here are aware, no one can emerge from this confrontation as the winner. However, the losers now number in the hundreds and the civilian population has been hit hard. The economic and humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip was already worrisome, and the current crisis has made the humanitarian distress of civilians intolerable for the international community. The daily reports from

humanitarian agencies are alarming. The distribution of food is being hampered by the closure of crossing points and by the military operations.

We most strongly condemn this morning's bombing by the Israeli army of a hospital, a facility of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and a building housing international media. Israel must refrain from any action contrary to international humanitarian law. The fighting must cease without delay to protect the severely affected civilian population and to permit access for humanitarian assistance. Moreover, we cannot ignore the risk of a regional expansion of the crisis, as demonstrated by the rocket attacks on Israel from southern Lebanon.

However, we now see a strong international mobilization in reaction to this escalation of violence. The President of the French Republic, Mr. Sarkozy, visited the region on 5 January with the European troika to meet with various actors. One week ago, the Security Council, meeting at the ministerial level under the French presidency, adopted resolution 1860 (2009), calling for an immediate, durable and fully respected ceasefire — including an end to the rocket attacks — leading to the full withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza. The Council has supported the Egyptian initiative to prevent trafficking in weapons and ammunition and ensure the permanent reopening of border crossings into Gaza, in order to put an end to the worsening humanitarian and economic situation. On Tuesday morning, the Security Council held consultations to hear what the Secretary-General had to

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say before leaving for the region. Mr. Ban Ki-moon received the full support of Council members in order to promote the implementation of resolution 1860 (2009) through contacts on the ground. This very morning, the Council held consultations on the latest developments in the situation in Gaza.

Under the French presidency, the Security Council is active, remains seized of the issue and is making clear statements. In our work, we must be committed to complying with the letter of Article 12 of the Charter of the United Nations. Above all, our common goal must be to support the immediate implementation of resolution 1860 (2009) in all its provisions. Let us be clear. The absolute priority for France is an immediate halt to the violence in order to put an end to the suffering of all civilian populations.

This is an urgent matter. The efforts of the international community should all be aimed to that end. We express the hope that this emergency special session will strictly follow this approach and will bring full support to the complete implementation of resolution 1860 (2009), particularly through completion of current diplomatic efforts on the ground, especially the French-Egyptian plan on which the parties are working. It is also urgent to support the international efforts to improve the humanitarian and economic situation in Gaza, as resolution 1860 (2009) demands, by supporting the activities of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and of recognized impartial humanitarian players.

When the weapons fall silent and the bases for a lasting ceasefire have been established, we must relaunch the Annapolis peace process begun more than a year ago. There is no alternative to a resumption of negotiations to create a viable, independent and democratic Palestinian State living in peace alongside Israel within safe and recognized borders. Resolution 1850 (2008) referred to the irreversible nature of that process. That peace should be based on the principle of land for peace, the resolutions of the Security Council and the Arab Peace Initiative, which represents a vital basis for a comprehensive and lasting solution in the Middle East.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the Permanent Representative of Uganda, who will make a statement on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

Mr. Butagira (Uganda): I have the honour to speak today on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) group in New York.

The OIC welcomes and supports the resumption today of this tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly on the illegal Israeli actions in occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory to discuss Israel's aggression in Gaza.

An emergency OIC Ministerial Executive Committee meeting held in Jeddah on 3 January 2009 called for the convening of a meeting of the General Assembly under the "Uniting for Peace" principle. This meeting of the General Assembly today is therefore a clear reflection of the seriousness with which the international community takes the tragic situation in Gaza and the need to find an immediate and sustainable solution.

The grave and worsening humanitarian crisis in Gaza as a result of Israeli actions is unacceptable. Civilians have borne the brunt of the attacks, which have caused hundreds of casualties, left thousands injured and wreaked massive destruction on property and civic facilities.

The violence in Gaza has claimed over 1,000 Palestinian lives and is now in its twentieth day. Today, the United Nations compound in Gaza was shelled again. Yesterday, we heard from the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, who stated that

"United Nations schools sheltering displaced persons have been hit; humanitarian workers have been killed and ambulances hit; the sick and wounded have been left trapped and unassisted; and up to 100,000 people have been displaced from their homes" (*S/PV.6066, p. 3*).

And he continued,

"[t]he situation for the civilian population of Gaza is terrifying, and its psychological impact is felt particularly by children and their parents, who feel helpless and unable to protect them" (*ibid.*).

We condemn Israeli actions in Gaza, which are excessive. They must stop. The effect of the current hostilities is the further destabilization of the situation in the occupied territories and in the wider Middle

East. The violence is also a serious threat to the Middle East peace process.

Israel must end its military operation immediately and open all border crossings to ensure unfettered access for the delivery of humanitarian supplies into Gaza. It is necessary to have immediate humanitarian access into Gaza to provide relief for and evacuation of the wounded, but this access cannot be guaranteed as long as Israeli military operations are ongoing.

Last week, the OIC welcomed the adoption by the Security Council of resolution 1860 (2009) on the Israeli aggression against the Gaza Strip. Although the resolution came late and did not address some of the fundamental issues related to the Israeli-Palestinian question, it represented a step in the right direction. We therefore call for the immediate and full implementation of the resolution to ensure that all concerned parties abide by it and that Israel demonstrates its commitment to stopping its aggression, withdrawing from the Gaza Strip, lifting the siege imposed on Gaza, opening the border crossings and allowing humanitarian assistance to cross into Gaza.

The Organization of the Islamic Conference has undertaken an emergency humanitarian assistance campaign launched by the OIC Secretary General with the objective of catering to the minimum basic humanitarian needs of the population in the Gaza Strip. On Wednesday, 14 January 2009, an OIC convoy delivered relief aid to the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip through the Rafah crossing. The OIC aid convoy included 300 tons of medicine, medical equipment and food supplies.

We thank the United Nations, its Member States and civil society institutions that have provided the people of Gaza with support in these difficult times. We call on them all to give further support because the humanitarian needs in Gaza are acute. We also pay tribute to all the humanitarian workers in Gaza who are continuing to carry out their work amid the terrible violence.

Finally, I wish to reiterate that the time has come for the violence to stop and for an immediate resumption of the peace process to deal with the question of Palestine in a comprehensive way in order to ensure a lasting and just peace in the Middle East, encompassing a two-State solution as called for in relevant Security Council resolutions.

Mr. Natalegawa (Indonesia): It is, of course, customary to begin by expressing appreciation for the convening of a meeting — in the present instance, the resumed tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly. Indeed, my delegation is particularly appreciative, since Indonesia has been one of the chief proponents of calling this meeting and therefore is solidly behind its convening.

Yet we are deeply saddened by the circumstances that require such an emergency session, namely, the worsening of the plight of innocent Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip brought about by Israel's military actions and its continued stubborn refusal to heed international calls to bring its military operations to an end.

The international community's total rejection of the violence now permeating the Gaza Strip as a result of Israeli actions must be made loud and clear through all appropriate avenues within the United Nations system, not least by our General Assembly.

For some three weeks now, the Israeli military operations against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip have rightly held the attention of the Security Council, the organ entrusted with the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. Indeed, after some delay, the Security Council took action by adopting resolution 1860 (2009) on 8 January 2009. We draw some encouragement from that decision, mindful at all times, however, of the need to ensure that the resolution be swiftly implemented.

Alas, one week later, the carnage continues unabated. Indeed, only earlier today, a compound belonging to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) was shelled, adding to the catalogue of atrocities committed by Israel.

Indonesia is outraged by the horrific consequences of Israel's actions. Indonesia once again condemns, in the strongest manner possible, Israeli military attacks against Palestinians in the occupied Gaza Strip, in contravention of international humanitarian and human rights law. The General Assembly is mandated by the Charter to call attention to situations which are likely to endanger international peace and security. Nowhere is that more true than in respect of the situation in the Middle East, which has the question of Palestine at its heart.

Today offers an opportunity for the wider membership of the United Nations to express its views on the grave situation in the Gaza Strip. We must not allow silence on the part of the General Assembly to be wrongly construed as acquiescence to the ongoing carnage caused by Israel. The international community cannot — and, indeed, must not — stand idly by as hundreds of innocent civilians, including women and children, fall victim to Israeli atrocities.

As the death toll mounts, it is clear that every moment counts. There must be urgent efforts to ensure the protection and safety of innocent civilians. In addition, we must not forget those who have perished. The perpetrators of these heinous crimes, which are in violation of international humanitarian and human rights law, must be held accountable.

As a member of the Human Rights Council, Indonesia thus welcomes the Council's adoption of a resolution on 12 January 2009, in which it decided, *inter alia*, to dispatch an independent international fact-finding mission to investigate all violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law by Israel as the occupying Power.

The continuing violence in the Gaza Strip has greatly worsened the already dire humanitarian situation caused by more than 18 months of Israeli closures. Combined with the incessant military attacks, this policy of the illegal blockade and closure of the Gaza Strip constitutes nothing less than the collective punishment of an entire people. The number of child victims — more than 300 killed and in excess of 1,500 injured — is harrowing. Innocent civilians are trapped, unable to flee the fighting and find refuge.

Israel must immediately and permanently lift the closures and ensure unhindered and safe access for humanitarian aid and other essential supplies to the civilian population in the Gaza Strip. It must also ensure the safe passage of civilian persons and humanitarian personnel into and out of the Gaza Strip, in accordance with international humanitarian law.

Worse still, Israel has continued its callous practice of targeting humanitarian convoys. The shelling of the UNRWA compound illustrates that, despite repeated assurances, Israel has continued to display utter disregard for humanitarian principles. Indonesia would like to pay tribute to the dedication and sacrifices of humanitarian personnel. We must lend the fullest possible support to their courageous efforts.

With every passing day, we bear witness to yet more deaths and destruction. The price of delay is clearly immeasurable. The Assembly must urgently issue a clarion call: end the fighting, reject the logic of force and promote dialogue and negotiations as the only path towards a just and sustainable peace.

In that connection, Indonesia deems it important that the General Assembly assert its role, not least as the conscience of the international community, and in order to add value to the various ongoing diplomatic efforts to bring the fighting to an end. We believe that the Assembly's focus should be on pushing for prompt and immediate action to, once again, bring the fighting to an end. In that connection, Indonesia would like to pay tribute in particular to the strong efforts of the Secretary-General, as well as those of the countries in the region, individually or collectively, through the League of Arab States.

The Charter of the United Nations clearly outlines that maintaining peace and security is one of the purposes of the Organization. The General Assembly has a historic responsibility with regard to the question of Palestine and the situation in the Middle East. My delegation therefore welcomes the intention of the President of the General Assembly to facilitate a formal outcome to our present deliberations. Of course, we must reaffirm the importance of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009). However, we must do more than that. We must build on the resolution, in keeping with the various concerns expressed during this emergency special session of the General Assembly.

From Indonesia's perspective, at least two issues stand out: first, the need to urge the international community — including countries in the region — to redouble their efforts to ensure the full implementation of resolution 1860 (2009); and, secondly, a request that the Secretary-General carry out an immediate investigation into the human rights violations and the destruction of Palestinian infrastructure caused by the Israeli military actions.

At this critical juncture, it is incumbent on the General Assembly to respond collectively and urgently in order to bring the fighting to an end and to achieve a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East based on all relevant Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003), the Madrid terms of reference

and the principle of land for peace. Indonesia, for its part, is committed to working earnestly to attain that objective.

Mr. Malhotra (India): We are meeting today on the margins of a serious crisis in West Asia. It is a crisis that has an impact on stability in the region and, beyond, in the world at large. We deeply regret the loss of all civilian lives; every innocent life lost is one too many. It is important that there be an end to the vicious circle of violence and counter-violence.

Speaking on the situation in Gaza, the Prime Minister of India, Mr. Manmohan Singh, expressed concern at the rise in tensions in the region as a result of the attack on Gaza, which has led to the needless loss of the lives of so many innocent men, women and children. He said:

"India has strongly condemned these incidents, and it is our hope that the international community will get together and help restore peace in the region as soon as possible. I wish to reiterate our unstinted and unwavering support for the just Palestinian cause."

We support ongoing initiatives — including that of the Secretary-General — for an immediate, durable and fully respected ceasefire, as called for in Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), with which all parties should comply.

The President took the Chair.

Mr. President, in your circular letter of 7 January 2009, you specifically asked the Assembly to consider the ongoing humanitarian situation. The deteriorating situation in Gaza has drawn the attention of the Government of India, and the plight of the population has become heart-rending. The daily timetable of a three-hour ceasefire does not appear to be producing any favourable changes in the situation. The situation on the energy front appears extremely grim, as nearly three fourths of the Gaza population is now without any electricity, and, with no fuel oil available, the prospects appear even more serious. The situation on the food front in Gaza is no better; some 750,000 people are without access to food. We express serious concern at the plight of the million and a half Gazan civilians living in a permanent state of fright. There is therefore an urgent need for assured humanitarian access with a view to the provision of essential commodities in Gaza.

Given the scale of the humanitarian disaster unfolding in Gaza and the escalating number of civilian victims, India, in response to the Flash Appeal made recently by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, is extending \$1 million in assistance for the Agency's use to provide shelter, cash assistance and essential household items to the affected families in Gaza. India has also announced a grant of \$10 million as budgetary support for the Palestinian National Authority, in addition to \$10 million in project assistance.

In parallel to all that, we must urgently reinforce our collective message that all actions that run counter to the commitments of the parties under the Road Map must cease. India remains steadfastly in support of a political solution based on the Road Map and the Arab Peace Initiative. It is important to move towards the early creation of an independent, sovereign and viable State of Palestine, living side by side with Israel within secure and internationally recognized borders.

India wants to see the creation of an environment for the earliest possible resumption of dialogue under the peace process and seeks an immediate end to the suffering of the people of Gaza.

Ms. Shalev (Israel): I would like to stress that my comments are without prejudice to our clear position of principle that the convening of this emergency special session violates the fundamental conditions of the "Uniting for Peace" procedure and the United Nations Charter.

The emergency special session is taking place as the Security Council is actively addressing the situation in southern Israel and the Gaza Strip. Only last week, the Security Council adopted resolution 1860 (2009), which seeks to promote an end to the current violence. As we speak, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is visiting our region, with the endorsement of the Security Council, with a view to facilitating a solution to the conflict.

Article 12 of the Charter of the United Nations states that

"while the Security Council is exercising in respect of any dispute or situation the functions assigned to it in the present Charter, the General Assembly shall not make any recommendation with regard to that dispute or situation unless the Security Council so requests".

That being the case, what is the real purpose of convening this emergency special session?

Furthermore, General Assembly resolution 377 (V) states that the emergency special sessions of the General Assembly are designed to act only when the Security Council, "because of lack of unanimity of the permanent members, fails to exercise its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security". That means in case of veto only. Since there was no veto on this matter, and since the Security Council remains actively seized of this issue, the convening of this meeting of the General Assembly is one that defies its own rules.

That is not the only inherent defect of this meeting. Among other things, the subject under discussion is far removed from the issue that gave rise to the never-ending tenth emergency special session. The convening of this meeting under the guise of the tenth emergency special session is therefore deceitful and contrary to established procedure and honest common sense.

Yet in today's meeting, the Assembly is trampling not only on its own procedural requirements, but also on the very principles it has committed itself to uphold. In its resolution 63/129 on measures to eliminate international terrorism, this Assembly reiterated its strong condemnation of all acts, methods and practices of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. But where was this Assembly's condemnation of the Hamas' terrorist attacks, its deliberate targeting of schools and hospitals and the eight years in which the residents of southern Israel have had to live their lives within 15 seconds' reach of bunkers to protect them from terrorist rockets and missiles? Where is the Assembly's strong condemnation of the incidents of Katyusha rockets fired from Lebanon on a nursing home in Nahariya and on Kiryat Shmona in the North of Israel just last week?

In the aforementioned resolution, the Assembly reiterated its call upon States to refrain from "financing, encouraging, providing training for or otherwise supporting terrorist activities". Where, then, is the condemnation of Iran, which manufactured many of the missiles smuggled into Gaza during the period of the so-called calm and trained the terrorists to fire them on Israeli schools and kindergartens? Where is the condemnation of Syria, which continues to host terrorist headquarters in Damascus and to facilitate the

flow of weapons and missiles across its border to Hizbullah?

In resolution 63/138 on the safety and security of humanitarian personnel and protection of United Nations personnel, the General Assembly stressed the importance of "fully respecting the obligations relating to the use of vehicles and premises of humanitarian personnel" (*resolution 63/138, twelfth preambular paragraph*) and the United Nations. Where, then, is its condemnation of Hamas and other terrorist groups for deliberately endangering civilians by hiding stockpiles of weapons and missiles inside hospitals and firing them from in and around United Nations schools?

In resolution 58/150 on assistance to unaccompanied refugee minors, this Assembly condemned

"all acts of exploitation of unaccompanied refugee minors, including their use as soldiers or human shields in armed conflict and their forced recruitment into military forces, and any other acts that endanger their safety and personal security" (*resolution 58/150, para. 8*).

Why, then, is this Assembly silent as Hamas launches attacks from densely populated homes and mosques while it cowers behind the Palestinian population as human shields?

In resolution 63/171 on combating defamation of religions, this Assembly expressed its deep concern at programmes and agendas pursued by extremist organizations and groups aimed at the defamation of religions and incitement to religious hatred. Where, then, is the deep concern of this Assembly at the toxic religious incitement and indoctrination of Palestinian children and the brutal persecution of Christians in Gaza? Where is rejection of the Hamas Covenant, which states: "No war takes place anywhere in the world without [the Jews] behind the scenes having a hand in it [as it is written in the Koran] 'Whenever they fan the flames of war, Allah will extinguish them'."

This Assembly is trampling on its own procedures and principles. But it is also trampling on the hopes of millions of people for a better future, for this meeting is being watched. It is being watched by the Hamas terrorist organization, which sees that there are dark corners of the international community in which disdain for human values will not deprive

Hamas of legitimacy. It is being watched by Al-Qaida and other terrorist groups around the world, who are learning that the resolve of the international community to confront terrorists is beginning to crack. They are learning that hiding behind civilians in the course of armed conflict, bringing death and injury upon such civilians, is indeed cowardly, but can be effective and serve their purpose. It is being watched by Iran, the sponsor of terror, for which it confirms that its war of terror by proxy against humanity may bring results. It is being watched by over 1 million Israeli civilians, who live under the threat of Hamas rockets and mortar shells.

Sadly, countless human tragedies and immeasurable human suffering exist around the world. Victims of the most severe violations of the most basic rights — in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Sudan, North Korea, Afghanistan, Somalia, Iran, Myanmar, Saudi Arabia, Zimbabwe and elsewhere — cry out for their plight to be heard and for their suffering to be redressed by the international community.

This meeting is being watched by those millions of victims. It is being watched by those who see that their suffering will never reach the international stage because the General Assembly is meeting today in a cynical, hateful and politicized fashion to delegitimize Israel's fundamental right to defend its citizens. From this meeting, all such victims can only draw despair.

The President: I thank the representative of Israel and reject her calling the General Assembly hateful and cynical. Those may be realities in our world today, but we must look elsewhere.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt) (spoke in Arabic): Allow me to begin with a call for calm and reason in the debate on the issue under discussion.

My delegation would like to express Egypt's appreciation for the kind initiative of the President to reconvene the tenth emergency special session, on the illegal Israeli actions in the occupied Palestinian territory, in response to several demands put forth by leaders and heads of State from various geographical and political groups, in particular the Non-Aligned Movement, based upon full respect for all procedures. I would also like to express our support for the statements made by the representatives of Morocco, on behalf of the Arab Group, Cuba, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, and Uganda, on behalf of the

Organization of the Islamic Conference. I also wish to thank the Secretary-General for his swift and vigorous efforts from the first day of the crisis and for his current visit to the Middle East, which began in Egypt, to work for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) and the achievement of a ceasefire as soon as possible.

The resumption of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly is taking place at a dangerous time, when the Gaza Strip is continuing to endure Israeli acts of aggression against the Palestinian people despite the adoption of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), which calls on both the Israelis and the Palestinians to stop the ongoing humanitarian tragedy. The resolution response to some of the demands of the Arab Ministerial Council, including calling for an immediate and durable ceasefire leading to the full withdrawal of Israeli forces, the lifting of the siege and the opening of border crossings to allow for the free flow of humanitarian and economic assistance. The resolution also calls for the alleviation of the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip and the establishment of a mechanism for the protection of Palestinian civilians and to monitor the implementation of the ceasefire by both parties and facilitate movement through the border crossings. The resolution also expresses support for many international and regional initiatives aimed at achieving those objectives, first and foremost the Egyptian initiative aiming at restoring calm and relaunching a credible and serious peace process in the Middle East.

The resumed tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly is taking place as Egypt continues its efforts to implement the initiative launched by President Hosni Mubarak and is consistent with Security Council resolution 1860 (2009). Egypt is also continuing to shoulder its historic responsibility towards the peace process and the fraternal Palestinian people. Moreover, Egypt is working to achieve the necessary complementarity between international and regional efforts aimed at halting the bloodshed in the Gaza Strip and putting in place the necessary arrangements and guarantees to implement Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), which welcomed the Egyptian initiative and the other Egyptian efforts.

The Egyptian initiative has sought to quickly and seriously address the severe humanitarian situation suffered by civilians on the ground by working on three main fronts. First, we are working to secure an

agreement by Israel and the Palestinian factions on an immediate ceasefire for a specified period to allow for the opening of safe corridors for humanitarian assistance and to allow time to pursue efforts to achieve a comprehensive and permanent ceasefire. Secondly, we are calling on both the Israeli and Palestinian parties to meet immediately to conclude arrangements and guarantees aimed at preventing the recurrence of an escalation of hostilities and at addressing the causes of the conflict. Thirdly, we are calling on the Palestinian Authority and all Palestinian factions to respond positively to efforts aimed at achieving Palestinian reconciliation under the auspices of Egypt. Egypt is also continuing its in-depth negotiations with both the Israeli and Palestinian sides — with the support and endorsement of a large number of States and parties from the region, as well as the Quartet — in order to quickly begin the implementation of Egypt's initiative and to end the bloodshed and break the vicious cycle of violence and military operations.

From the first day that the Arab Group brought the Israeli military operations in the Gaza Strip to the attention of the Security Council, the Council has expressed the clear will of the international community by demanding a halt to aggression in a press release that also called unanimously for a ceasefire. The Security Council also reiterated that will in resolution 1860 (2009), which it adopted by 14 votes in favour, with 1 abstention. The abstaining member, the United States, in an explanation of its vote by the Secretary of State, clearly emphasized its commitment to the resolution and its support for an immediate ceasefire and the ongoing regional efforts towards that end.

We welcomed the adoption of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), despite the fact that it meets only a minimum of the Arab demands. We believe it was an important step towards the balanced implementation of numerous mutual commitments, including the declaration of an immediate ceasefire by both sides. Today we renew, from this rostrum, our full support for resolution 1860 (2009) and our call for its implementation. We also call for urgent efforts to achieve an immediate halt to the violence and military activities by both sides and the permanent reopening of border crossings in accordance with the 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access between the Palestinian Authority and the Government of Israel. We also call for immediate access for all forms of

humanitarian and economic assistance to Gaza, in order to maintain the calm and to prevent an escalation of the current situation. Egypt also calls for immediate efforts at reconstruction and for moving towards a comprehensive and credible peace process based on the vision of two States, the relevant United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative of 2002.

Arab and international frustration is mounting daily as thousands of Palestinians fall victim to the massacre carried out by the Israeli war machine. In addition, the Security Council continues to be paralysed, and is therefore incapable of putting an end to the killing of innocent civilians and the destruction of infrastructure in the Gaza Strip. It has also been incapable of providing the necessary protection to United Nations facilities in Gaza, in particular the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

Israel is continuing to shell United Nations premises, specifically UNRWA and the humanitarian compound — just as it previously shelled the UNRWA school, Al-Quds hospital, a media centre and other infrastructure. All of those acts of aggression illustrate Israel's defiance of the international Organization and its collective will. Therefore, all of us in the United Nations, including the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Secretary-General, must work together to guarantee the full and faithful implementation of all the provisions of resolution 1860 (2009) in order to preserve the credibility of the Organization, strengthen its role in protecting the Palestinian people and bring pressure to bear on Israel to cease forthwith its violation of international law and international humanitarian law and to stop defying the will of the international community.

The pretext of legitimate self-defence does not justify Israel's use of excessive and disproportionate military force — let alone internationally banned weapons — against Palestinian civilians, which it has done, particularly in the light of the provisions of international law and international humanitarian law regarding the need to safeguard civilians in times of war. It also does not justify the killing of children in schools run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East; it does not justify bombing reporters and media centres in an attempt to prevent them from transmitting the real picture of Israel's brutal actions in Gaza, nor does it

justify attacking hospitals so that they cannot provide basic services to the injured.

Therefore, in the light of the international consensus on giving life to the principle of the responsibility to protect, as set forth in paragraphs 138 and 139 of the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document, the concept should be extended to include Palestinian civilians under occupation. In accordance with resolution 1860 (2009), we request the establishment of an international force to protect the Palestinian people in Gaza, monitor the ceasefire on both sides and facilitate movement through border crossings, which should complement the Human Rights Council's resolution of 12 January 2009 calling for an immediate and just investigation of the international crimes that have been committed and for their perpetrators to be prosecuted.

Accordingly, we call on the General Assembly to send a clear and strong message of its support for resolution 1860 (2009). We also request that a draft resolution be submitted by the President of the General Assembly that reflects the support of all Member States for the resolution and for efforts to implement it, as well as the full compliance of both parties and Member States with its provisions. We fully trust that the General Assembly will shoulder its responsibility and adopt the draft resolution by consensus.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that Egypt, which opened the door to peace in the Middle East and has sponsored the Palestinian cause from the very beginning, will continue to support the Palestinian people's struggle to overcome their predicament and to counter the grave challenges facing them internally and externally, which include achieving the primary goal of Palestinian reconciliation and agreeing on a clear political horizon that can contribute to the success of international and regional efforts to stop the aggression. This approach aims at creating the appropriate conditions for advancing the peace process, leading to the establishment of an independent State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, on the West Bank and in the territory of the Gaza Strip, which in their entirety constitute the land of the independent, indivisible Palestinian State. One people — the Palestinian people — will live on this land with their various factions of all political, ideological and conceptual stripes. We fully trust that the international community represented here will support our efforts

and the efforts of the Security Council and other parties active in the pursuit and achievement of this goal.

In this context, Egypt supports the pivotal role played by the United Nations, particularly its Secretary-General, and the international Quartet. This role gives our work its international character and provides an effective link between our activities at the United Nations and those of the Quartet in addressing the situation on the ground and in coordinating with the parties themselves. We thus call for the support of our colleagues in the General Assembly as we continue to work towards the ultimate achievement of just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

Mr. İkin (Turkey): As we enter the twentieth day of Israeli operations in Gaza, the death toll — now over 1,000, including a great number of women and children — continues to rise. Entire families have perished in the violence. For the people of Gaza, the borders are closed and there is no place to go. Even United Nations headquarters and buildings are not spared from attacks, as we have seen today.

No one can accept such a siege. No one can tolerate such an action, of which civilians take the brunt and are the victims. We deeply regret the ongoing human tragedy in Gaza. At the very least, there should be a basic consideration for these suffering victims because there is an obligation to protect civilians and to respect the sanctity of life.

We reiterate our urgent appeal to stop the bloodshed and to halt all military activities. We invite the parties to implement Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), which calls for an immediate ceasefire and the full withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza, without further delay. There is no time to lose. The longer the Israeli military operation continues, the greater the number of innocent lives that will be in jeopardy.

The situation in Gaza has now become a humanitarian catastrophe. Unimpeded access for humanitarian assistance throughout Gaza, as well as the sustained and regular flow of goods to the people of Gaza, as set forth in resolution 1860 (2009), are a must. The blockade of Gaza should be lifted in all its aspects.

That having been said, of course, Israel has a right to live in security. We by no means condone the continued rocket attacks launched against civilian

targets in Israel. However, we call on Israel to reconsider its policies, which cannot deliver the sense of security it seeks. Excessive use of force and punitive measures that harm the well-being of the entire population are not the way towards permanent peace. It should not be forgotten that the Palestinians who are being bombed and attacked today will be Israel's neighbours forever.

The tragedy in Gaza, if not stopped immediately, will increasingly continue to fuel the flames of hatred and enmity in the region. That is a very dangerous trend which has the potential of poisoning not only the present but future generations as well.

With these thoughts in mind, we continue our efforts and contacts at all levels in order to help to bring an end to this conflict. Our Prime Minister's special representative is now in the region and involved in intense shuttle diplomacy. We sincerely hope that all the endeavours undertaken by different players promptly yield positive results. In the meantime, we are also continuing our massive humanitarian relief efforts for the people of Gaza in order to alleviate their suffering as much as we can.

We also underline the importance of national reconciliation among Palestinians, which, we believe, is crucial not only for the national unity and integrity of Palestine, but also for the prospect of permanent peace and stability in the region.

Resolution 1860 (2009) has provided an opportunity to end the hostilities in Gaza. This opportunity must be seized. The calm in the region must be restored so that we can once again start addressing the urgent need to achieve a viable and comprehensive peace through all tracks of the Middle East peace process.

Mr. Alsaïdi (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, first of all, allow me to thank you for convening this emergency special session. This meeting is extremely important because of the tragedy that the Palestinian people are facing in Gaza.

My country wishes to align itself with the statements made by the representative of Morocco on behalf of the Group of Arab States, by the representative of Uganda on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and by the representative of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

As we meet here today, the defenceless Palestinian population in Gaza is enduring a savage attack launched 20 days ago by Israel, the occupying Power. Despite the fact that that barbaric attack has claimed the lives of more than 1,000 Palestinians and injured thousands more, the Israeli authorities are stepping up their military operations and say that they will stop only after their objectives have been attained. It is a stunning paradox that this outrageous war, declared by Israel against a people who have been under occupation for more than four decades, is being justified as legitimate self-defence. How can the occupier continue to invoke the right to self-defence when the occupation is itself an aggression?

Whatever the status of the Israeli army's redeployment, no one — not even those who support Tel Aviv — can deny that Israel has total control over Gaza's land and sea borders as well as its airspace. Therefore, one can say that Gaza is still under Israeli occupation. Those who deny that fact read international law from a political perspective. Such a reading is not only illogical but runs counter to the norms of international law itself. How can the inhuman practices of imposing a deadly blockade against families and children and denying them access to food, medicine and electricity be justified as self-defence? Has the concept of self-defence changed overnight? Or has it perhaps been reinterpreted in order to conceal Israel's crimes? Whoever occupies another's territory, establishes settlements there and changes facts on the ground cannot claim that those acts are carried out in self-defence, because they violate international law and the Fourth Geneva Convention. Indeed, those who are fighting against the occupier and its policies of land-grabbing, expansion and annexation are the ones defending themselves. Those who are fighting against the occupier, in accordance with the rules of international law, are not terrorists but freedom fighters, despite the fact that some confuse the legitimate fight against an occupier with terrorism.

We in Yemen are convinced that the tragedy of the Palestinian people will come to an end only when the international community shoulders its responsibilities by ending Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and ensuring its withdrawal from all other Arab territories. What is now occurring in occupied Gaza and elsewhere is a barbaric aggression aimed at imposing a fait accompli that will force the Palestinians to flee their

homes, farms and lands to make room for Jewish settlers.

Following the Security Council's adoption of resolution 1860 (2009), Israel has, as usual, ignored the resolution and continued its aggression against the Palestinian people in Gaza. The Council must therefore compel Israel to comply with that resolution. We stress that the Council and the international community as a whole must take the following measures if they wish to re-establish their authority with regard to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

First, they must condemn the ongoing Israeli aggression. Secondly, they must impose an immediate, unequivocal and unconditional ceasefire to prevent Israel from attaining its objective of destroying all infrastructure in Gaza. Thirdly, they must state explicitly that all crossing points into Gaza must be opened so that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, other humanitarian organizations and the international community as a whole can ensure the provision of humanitarian assistance and supplies to the besieged people of Gaza. Fourthly, they must compel Israel, the occupying Power, to honour its commitments under the Fourth Geneva Convention of 12 August 1949, which forbids an occupier from changing facts on the ground in the occupied territory. Fifthly, they must ensure that Israel puts an end to the settlements on the Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and other occupied Arab lands; and dismantles those already established. Sixthly, they must compel Israel to comply with the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice by dismantling the expansionist wall separating Palestinians from one another, farmers from their lands, imams from their mosques and the sick from hospitals.

We have no doubt that what we are demanding is not impossible to fulfil and that the Security Council could do all those things if its members had the requisite political will. We are also convinced that the ongoing Israeli aggression has offended the human conscience. Forcing Israel to comply with the international will and the norms of international law is a prerequisite for the achievement of peace and stability in the Middle East, the cradle of monotheistic religions, and human civilizations.

Mr. Sin Son Ho (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Allow me, first of all, to express my

delegation's appreciation to you, Mr. President, for having convened this very important and timely meeting.

The delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea strongly condemns the recent Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip of Palestine as a wanton violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations and an open provocation to the Middle East peace process. At this very moment, Israeli armed forces are mercilessly killing innocent Palestinian civilians and destroying houses, public buildings and schools at random. Those are clearly acts of State terrorism and crimes against humanity.

What cannot be overlooked in this regard is the fact that the Israeli atrocities are backed by the United States of America. The entire world is now denouncing Israeli aggression and calling for an immediate end to all of Israel's military actions. However, to our regret, the United States of America alone is taking sides with Israel, even justifying Israeli actions to obstruct peace. That proves once again that the peace breaker and the worst human rights violator in the world is none other than the United States of America.

It is the legitimate right of the Palestinian people to recover their occupied territory and to build an independent sovereign State. It is therefore a just cause for them to fight to achieve their goal. The Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea extends its full support and solidarity to the Palestinian people in their struggle to expel the Israeli aggressors from their own territory and to regain their legitimate rights, including the right to self-determination. Israel should immediately stop all its military actions and withdraw its aggressive forces from Gaza Strip.

Finally, I am obliged, and it is my duty, to respond to the statement made by the Israeli representative. The representative of Israel must be aware that this is a special meeting pertaining to her country's operations against innocent Palestinian people. This is not a special meeting to raise questions about any other country, including my country. My delegation would like to advise the representative of Israel to be more humble, to be more innocent and to be more sincere about the purpose of this meeting. My delegation categorically rejects her statement, which is not acceptable at all.

Mr. Sangqu (South Africa): We welcome the holding of this emergency meeting and are pleased at

your initiative, Mr. President. We also wish to associate ourselves with the statement delivered by the representative of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

There has been a gross exacerbation of violence over the past few weeks in Gaza and southern Israel. So many innocent people have been killed and injured that it is imperative for the Assembly to collectively and publicly voice its condemnation of the attacks and demand that both sides immediately cease their military attacks and violence.

Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), which was adopted by the Council a week ago, called for, in paragraph 1, "an immediate, durable and fully respected ceasefire, leading to the full withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza". It further called, in paragraph 2, for "the unimpeded provision and distribution throughout Gaza of humanitarian assistance, including of food, fuel and medical treatment".

We are extremely disappointed that the resolution has not yet been implemented. We urge all parties to fully respect Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) and to immediately implement its provisions. Should there be no compliance with the resolution, we would expect the Security Council to take the appropriate measures within its Charter-based mandate to implement its decisions. We believe that the immediate next step for the Security Council is to strengthen resolution 1860 (2009) by demanding that a ceasefire, the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza and the easing of the blockade by opening borders should be done immediately and simultaneously.

The South African Government has expressed its view that Israeli air strikes are a violation of international humanitarian law and human rights law. The South African Government has called on the Israeli Government to stop the military onslaught in Gaza and to immediately and unconditionally withdraw its forces.

These Israeli air strikes also represent an excessive and disproportionate use of force by Israel. The more than 1,000 deaths, including those of approximately 350 children, and the further thousands of injuries, are unjustifiable. We join the Secretary-General in reiterating Israel's obligation to uphold international humanitarian and human rights law and

condemn its excessive use of force leading to the killing, maiming and injuring of civilians.

In that regard, we do not believe that Israel's right to self-defence entitles it to violate the rights of innocent civilians, particularly those civilians who have been living under 40 years of illegal occupation. Israel cannot expect security for its people or political normalcy as long as it occupies Palestinian lands and continues its attempt to impose its permanent rule over the Palestinians by military force.

My delegation is particularly concerned about the devastating humanitarian consequences of the occupation, the siege and the continuing attacks into Gaza. That situation has been made worse by the escalating military attacks, which have also targeted and killed United Nations humanitarian workers. Continued attacks on the United Nations, its staff and other humanitarian agencies cannot be tolerated. We are concerned about the fact that, due to those attacks, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East has suspended its activities until the Israeli authorities guarantee its safety and security. The International Committee of the Red Cross has issued a statement citing examples of where the Israeli military has failed to meet its obligations under international humanitarian law by hindering access. We join the Secretary-General in calling for full and unhindered humanitarian access to allow aid workers to operate in safety to reach communities in need.

South Africa's President Motlanthe has reiterated that violence and counter-violence will not advance the cause of either Israelis or Palestinians, and thus neither strength nor efforts must be spared by the Palestinians and the Israelis to find an amicable solution based on two States: an independent Palestinian State coexisting side by side with an Israeli State, each living within secure borders.

South Africa calls upon the United Nations family to stand together in condemning the escalation of violence. The General Assembly, the most democratic and representative body, should demand an immediate ceasefire, the immediate withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza, the immediate opening of Gaza's borders to end the inhumane siege and the provision of immediate and unimpeded humanitarian assistance. The international community has a responsibility to use all means possible to stop the

violence that is leading to the unacceptable humanitarian crisis in the region. To do less would again call into question the credibility of the Organization in addressing the loss of innocent lives in the Middle East.

Mr. Khazaei (Islamic Republic of Iran): At the outset, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to you, Mr. President, for your decision to give a positive response to the requests of numerous Member States to resume the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly. We are confident that, under your wise and brave leadership, the session will be guided towards a productive outcome.

The Islamic Republic of Iran believes that, in considering the Zionist regime's criminal acts in the occupied Palestinian territory, the highest priority should be accorded to the act of illegitimate, forceful and unlawful occupation of that territory, which serves as the first cause of decades of that regime's criminal acts in Palestine and in the region. The catastrophic situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, especially the ongoing tragedy in the Gaza Strip that has resulted from the abhorrent carnage and the crimes against humanity perpetrated by the Israeli regime, is a clear manifestation of a cold-blooded massacre of innocent civilians, most of them women and children. It is clear now that the 1.5 million starved and besieged Palestinian inhabitants of the Gaza Strip — the world's largest concentration camp, created by the Israeli occupying Power — are being forced to continue to collectively pay for democratically electing their Government.

The massacre currently taking place in the Gaza Strip is a matter of urgent and extreme concern to the Iranian people, its Government and the whole world. The entire population of Gaza, which has been under a crippling blockade, starved and deprived of the most basic supplies for the past 18 months, has now been strangled and slaughtered for the twentieth consecutive day by a barbaric occupying regime that knows nothing about humanity or respect for human beings. Since that regime's thirst for blood has not been quenched by targeting every human being, every house and every infrastructure in the Gaza Strip, it has resorted to unimaginable criminal acts, such as the bombardment of innocent children and women taking shelter in United Nations-declared safe buildings and killing and injuring United Nations humanitarian personnel and local paramedics. It is evident that, once

again, by committing those barbaric crimes, the Israeli regime has challenged the credibility of the international community and the civilized world and has undermined the most basic values for which the civilized world stands.

Yet another example of the Israeli regime's contempt for the United Nations and for the values for which the Organization stands was in evidence when the main United Nations compound in Gaza was left in flames today after being struck by Israeli shells containing white phosphorous. That shows disrespect for United Nations officials as well, as the attack came as the Secretary-General was in the occupied territories. That is a crime that, along with other Israeli crimes, should not go unpunished. We strongly condemn it and believe that it and other Israeli attacks on United Nations personnel and premises require urgent action by the United Nations. We are therefore of the view that that regime is not qualified to be a Member of this Organization.

We firmly believe that the world community should take urgent measures in unison to stop the current Israeli attacks, which bear all the trademarks of collective punishment, crimes against humanity and war crimes. In that connection, we welcome the outcome of the ninth special session of the Human Rights Council on the grave violations of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territory, including the recent aggression in the occupied Gaza Strip. We support the resolution adopted by the Council which, *inter alia*, calls for condemnation of the Israeli regime's ongoing military operations in the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly in the Gaza Strip; the immediate cessation of the Israeli regime's military attacks throughout the Palestinian occupied territory, particularly in the Gaza Strip; and the immediate withdrawal of its military forces from the Gaza Strip. In the same vein, we strongly support the Human Rights Council in its decision to dispatch an urgent independent international fact-finding mission to investigate all violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law by the Israeli occupying Power against the Palestinian people throughout the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly in the Gaza Strip.

Despite its mandate to provide a full and effective response to such circumstances, no effective action has thus far been taken by the Security Council to stop the massacre of the Palestinians. The Security Council was

first prevented by some permanent members from taking any action. When it belatedly took action, the resolution it adopted — resolution 1860 (2009) — did not address the expectations of the international community, *inter alia*, with regard to forcing the Israeli regime to stop its atrocities against the Palestinians and withdraw from Gaza, or even in strongly condemning the Israeli regime's crimes against humanity and devising a mechanism for holding Israeli officials accountable for the war crimes and the crimes against humanity they have committed and continue to perpetrate against the Palestinian people in general and in the Gaza Strip in particular. Even that resolution, as imperfect and belated as it is, is being totally ignored by the Israeli regime, like many other previous United Nations resolutions to which its response has been contempt and defiance.

We are of the view that now that the Security Council has been unable to stop those criminal acts, the General Assembly, as the most representative and democratic body of the United Nations, should take immediate measures to put pressure on the Israeli regime to end the carnage. Today, the Assembly should adopt a resolution to condemn those atrocities and to call for, first, an immediate end to Israeli attacks and aggression against the innocent Palestinian people in Gaza; secondly, the immediate Israeli withdrawal from Gaza; thirdly, the lifting of the blockade; fourthly, the opening of crossings; and, fifthly, the urgent provision of humanitarian assistance to the people there.

The deliberate indiscriminate attacks by the Israeli military against civilian targets in the Gaza Strip and the massive use of prohibited weapons are grave violations of international humanitarian law and constitute war crimes. Despite the Zionist regime's claims, the widespread use of force and violence is aimed at the whole population of the Gaza Strip and, as such, amounts to genocide. There is no doubt that the Israeli regime's atrocities against Palestinians in the besieged Gaza Strip are tantamount to crimes against humanity. We firmly believe that urgent action needs to be taken at the United Nations to defend the Palestinian population being collectively punished by policies that amount to a crime against humanity, as they have rightly been characterized by the United Nations Human Rights Council's Special Rapporteur on human rights in Palestinian territory.

I should like to remind everyone that the report of the Special Rapporteur was presented well before the

shocking atrocities committed during the past 20 days against the Palestinians. The outrageous crimes committed during those 20 days have left no excuse: the international community must take urgent action to stop the Israeli war machine and to prosecute its leaders. The Israeli regime's leaders and military commanders must be indicted and prosecuted for grave violations of international law and for committing multiple crimes against humanity and war crimes.

The Security Council and the International Criminal Court should exercise their responsibility to bring the criminals to justice and prevent impunity. The General Assembly, for its part, may also take the necessary measures to put in place an arrangement or mechanism under Article 22 of the Charter to investigate the crimes committed by the Israeli regime against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip.

Before I conclude, I wish to reiterate my Government's unwavering and continuing support for the Palestinian people in their rightful and legitimate efforts and struggle to exercise their right of self-determination.

Mr. Le Luong Minh (Viet Nam): On behalf of the Vietnamese delegation, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for convening this emergency meeting of the General Assembly. I would also like to thank Ambassador Abelardo Moreno Fernández of Cuba for presenting the common position of the Non-Aligned Movement, which Viet Nam completely shares and supports.

The escalation of violence and the losses and suffering of the Palestinian people in Gaza as a result of the illegal Israeli bombings and military operations have been a cause of deep concern for the international community. We are gravely concerned about the loss of the lives of so many innocent people — including many defenceless women, children and humanitarian personnel — and about the massive destruction to their homes and property, as well as to Gaza's infrastructure and to United Nations facilities, including schools and hospitals.

Faced with the gravity of the current crisis, my delegation emphasizes the need to cease all military activities and violence and to provide immediate protection for the Palestinian civilian population in Gaza in accordance with international humanitarian law. We urge all parties concerned to respond to the repeated appeals of the international community and to

implement without delay Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), which was adopted a week ago and provides for an immediate, durable and fully respected ceasefire, the unimpeded provision and distribution throughout Gaza of humanitarian assistance and the sustained re-opening of the border crossings into Gaza on the basis of the 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access.

We urge Israel to stop all military operations, immediately withdraw forces from Gaza and lift the blockade and restrictions against the Palestinian population, thus creating the basic conditions for halting the cycle of violence and resolving the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Viet Nam supports the adoption by the General Assembly of a resolution to that effect.

United Nations agencies, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), other humanitarian organizations and the international community play a crucial and indispensable role in providing emergency assistance to the Palestinian people in Gaza. We urge the parties concerned to facilitate the safe and unhindered operations of humanitarian personnel on the ground and to take measures to ensure their safety. In solidarity with the suffering people of Palestine in Gaza, the Vietnamese Government has decided to provide emergency assistance, which is to be transmitted to UNRWA for further distribution.

Violence and counter-violence will neither advance mutual peace and security for Palestinians and Israelis nor help them to achieve the internationally recognized and desired goal of a two-State solution. At this critical juncture, we call upon all parties concerned to exercise the utmost restraint, renounce all actions that may cause further bloodshed and immediately return to peaceful negotiations to resolve the remaining disputes. Viet Nam stands ready to support and contribute to the intensified and coordinated efforts of the United Nations, countries of the region and the international community at large to find a durable solution that might help end the continuing loss of innocent lives, prevent the current situation from recurring or further escalating and put the peace process back on track.

In conclusion, I wish to reaffirm Viet Nam's steadfast support for the peaceful settlement of the

Israeli-Palestinian conflict and for the right of the Palestinian people to exercise self-determination and sovereignty in their independent State of Palestine, living side by side in peace with Israel within secure and recognized borders, on the basis of the road map, the Arab Peace Initiative, the Annapolis joint understanding and the relevant United Nations resolutions, including those of the Security Council.

Mr. Almansoor (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): We would like to convey our great appreciation to you, Mr. President, for your prompt response to the calls to resume the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly to consider the illegal Israeli actions and practices in the occupied Palestinian territories, especially in the Gaza Strip. We commend your noble position with regard to the brutal Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip.

My delegation supports the statements made by the Permanent Representative of Morocco on behalf of the Arab Group and by the Permanent Representative of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

This meeting is taking place 20 days after the beginning of the premeditated and methodically planned Israeli aggression against the occupied Gaza Strip, which to date has resulted in more than 1,000 Palestinian civilians martyred and over 5,000 wounded, most of them women, children and the elderly. This has been done through the use of Israel's sophisticated war machine, which employs every possible modern lethal weapon, including internationally banned white phosphorus bombs, which have now been used for the first time. Those weapons have caused the widespread destruction to inhabited homes, destroyed Palestinian infrastructure and produced generalized destruction of unprecedented magnitude.

The world is still witnessing Israel's ferocious war machine raining its fire and lethal rockets down on Gaza from the air, land and sea, turning the Gaza Strip into rubble. The world has seen what Israel is doing to innocent Palestinians. The more dead and wounded Palestinians there are each day, the more Israel thirsts to continue its aggression to blindly cause more death and destruction. Today, there has been yet another act of military escalation — the most violent since Israel began its aggression against the Gaza Strip.

In an effort to bring an end to that unjust aggression, the international community has from the beginning followed the efforts and daily contacts

among Arab States at every level. On 8 January, the Security Council adopted resolution 1860 (2009), which calls for an immediate and durable ceasefire that leads to the full withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip. Nevertheless, the resolution has been totally rejected by Israel. Soon after its adoption, the Israeli Prime Minister stated that Israel was not concerned by the resolution and that it was no more than a dead letter. In so doing, Israel is flouting the provisions of the resolution and the responsibility and mandate of the Security Council for the maintenance of international peace and security. Having taken that position, in line with its past practices, Israel has completely aborted every international effort to end the aggression. By ignoring and showing contempt for the United Nations and the international community, Israel has placed itself above the rules of international law. Such an intransigent stance by Israel serves to erode the work of the United Nations, weaken its role and paralyze its activities. In fact, the credibility of the Security Council and the United Nations in standing up to Israel in this crisis is currently being tested as a result of the disdain with which Israel looks upon Security Council and General Assembly resolutions.

In an important resolution adopted on 12 January 2009, the Human Rights Council condemned Israeli military operations in Gaza and decided to establish a fact-finding commission to investigate Israel's violations in the Gaza Strip. That resolution also calls on the Secretary-General to investigate the targeting of the premises of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), including the bombing of its schools, which led to scores of deaths among Palestinian civilians, including women and children.

From the beginning of the crisis, the Kingdom of Bahrain joined international efforts to stop Israel's unjustified aggression. We have made tireless efforts on the political and humanitarian fronts to put an end to the bloodshed. In a public address on 8 January 2009, His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa of Bahrain expressed deep concern and sadness in connection with the hundreds of martyred Palestinian civilians. He also called for an end to this mass tragedy and the human suffering of the peaceful civilian population of Gaza. In order to alleviate the terrible suffering of the Palestinian people, His Majesty directed the royal charity to rebuild, at his personal expense, UNRWA's Al-Fakhura school in the Jabaliya

camp. He has allocated \$3 million for the rebuilding of the school, which was bombed by Israel, resulting in the martyrdom or wounding of scores, including women and children. In addition, the Kingdom of Bahrain has today dispatched another convoy of humanitarian assistance destined for the brotherly Palestinian people. Bahrain has also supported the initiative of His Excellency President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt. We have welcomed Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), supported all other efforts and initiatives by friendly countries to stop the blatant aggression and called on the international community to assume its responsibility.

Needless to say, the basic problem continues to be Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory. Recent years have demonstrated that Arab States have made strenuous efforts to achieve a peaceful resolution to this problem. However, Israel, the occupying Power, has continued to undermine and hamper every peaceful overture, as well as to generally outmanoeuvre peace efforts and initiatives by creating successive crises in order to scuttle those efforts. Whenever the region comes closer to peace, Israel creates yet another problem. Israel's rejection of the Arab Peace Initiative, which was adopted at the Beirut Arab summit in 2002 to complement the efforts of the international Quartet and set out the prerequisites for peace and the establishment of a Palestinian State, with Jerusalem as its capital, is still fresh in our minds.

Today we face a very serious situation whose repercussions may spread to the entire Middle East region. Preserving the credibility of the United Nations requires the Organization to compel Israel to respect all the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly. The Palestinian people have made sacrifices for the past 60 years in the hope of achieving justice and recovering their full rights. The Kingdom of Bahrain stands alongside the international community in emphasizing the need to put an end to Israeli aggression and to heal the wounds of the Palestinian people. Let us all work together for peace, our ultimate goal.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to you, Mr. President, for responding quickly to the appeal by the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement to reconvene the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly.

We are meeting here today, overwhelmed with grief, to consider yet again Israel's renewed acts of aggression against the Palestinian people in Gaza. Regrettably, Israel's acts of aggression are now a permanent item on the agenda of the General Assembly, in particular, and on that of the United Nations in general. That has been the case since Israel's inception, due to its decades-old occupation of Arab and Palestinian territories and the deviant behaviour of its leaders and their perpetration of war crimes under the absolute protection of their guardians and of those who cover up their crimes, especially those who pay lip service to the rights of flora, fauna and humankind alike.

The unabated aggression by Israel, which is armed to the teeth, against the unarmed Palestinian people is now in its twentieth day. In those 20 days, the Security Council has gone from a total failure to adopt a resolution to maintain international peace and security to a failure of a larger scope, represented by its inability to enforce its resolutions, despite the fact that Article 25 of the Charter is very clear with respect to the enforceability of Security Council resolutions. After fabricating a political and moral difficulty that has no justification whatsoever, the Security Council failed to move to put an end to the cowardly Israeli acts of aggression, supported by an advanced American military war machine, on the women and children of Gaza.

After such shameful difficulty, the Security Council assisted in the birth, by caesarean section, of a weak resolution devoid of will and means of implementation. The resolution pleads with Israel to put an end to its military operations. As expected, Israel, with the full protection of its guardians and partners, refused to implement the resolution, thus eroding international peace and security.

The Security Council therefore stands today paralysed, unable to give legitimacy to this new birth and incapable of holding Israeli leaders accountable for failing to respect the provisions of resolution 1860 (2009). Since this is not the first time that the Security Council has taken pride in its inability to shoulder its responsibilities — it has done so repeatedly with respect to Israel, beginning in 1948 — all of us are now obligated to implore the General Assembly to address this failure by the Council, the credibility of which has become a laughing stock throughout the world in general and in our region in particular.

The Council has even become the subject of sarcasm, particularly since it has shown unprecedented determination under other, far less important or serious circumstances, and despite the fact that such interventions by the Council have led to the dismembering of States and threatened other States with dismemberment. The Council has failed to implement all of its resolutions relative to the Middle East and the question of Palestine, foremost among which are resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 497 (1981). The list goes on and on, for a very simple reason — these resolutions simply concern Israel. It is as if the Security Council custom-tailors measures that have no or little bearing on the interests of our countries, but are strictly confined to the very narrow interests of some influential States, with the sole objective of placing Israel above international law. In this way, the Security Council pursues racial discrimination that runs counter to the ethics on which our Organization was founded, in accordance with the Charter.

Unfortunately, resolution 1860 (2009) has met the same fate as all the other resolutions on Israel that occasionally emerge from the Council's discussions — indeed, each and every time Israel commits a new act of aggression against States in the region under the flagrant protection of its guardians.

The people of Gaza, busy burying their dead, have neither the time nor the ability to express their joy at the Council's adoption of its recent resolution, the Council having failed time and again to provide them with protection. It appears that they have lost their last hope in a Security Council that takes very lightly the deaths of over 1,000 Palestinians to date, in full view of those who happily prevaricate and scheme, and whose dormant consciences remain unmoved before the carnage of more than 500 children and 200 women, the annihilation of entire families at the hands of war criminals — the Israeli leaders — who have become specialists in killing women and children and who compete with each other over who can kill the largest number of Palestinians in order to win the post of Israeli premier minister.

Sources indicate that the numbers will turn out to be significantly higher than those originally given, due to the many seriously injured victims and the lack of medical expertise and supplies. Moreover, coverage of these atrocities could not be transmitted on television

screens simply because the Israeli occupation forces would not allow the media to enter the Strip.

To give just a snapshot to the Assembly of the barbarity of the Israeli attack, the Israeli war machine struck a school run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in Jabaliya, killing 43 women and children who had taken refuge there thinking that the United Nations compound would protect them. In the face of irrefutable evidence, Israel admitted that it deliberately shelled that school. Apparently, no one in this international Organization has moved to hold the leaders of the Israeli aggression accountable for this recent crime.

Failure to hold the Israeli leaders accountable has led to one reality — Israeli leaders who are emboldened to persist in their crimes and who order further attacks against United Nations headquarters like those they had ordered on two previous occasions — both in Qana, Lebanon, in 1996 and 2006. Let us recall that hundreds of Lebanese civilians who had taken refuge in the United Nations compound in southern Lebanon, thinking that they would be safe from the Israeli inferno, were killed at that time. Worse still is the fact that the Israeli decision to attack the United Nations headquarters in Gaza coincided with the presence of the Secretary-General in Israel in pursuit of peace.

Despite this negative Israeli attitude, world public opinion and peacelovers have succeeded in making Israel a pariah entity led by a group of negligent racists who compete among each other in such a cowardly manner as to shed the blood of defenceless Palestinians and who take pride in their sadistic instincts in televised interviews. It is ironic that the guardians of Israel, who are in the minority now, thank God, continue to say that Israel is an oasis of democracy. What democracy are we talking about?

The failure of the Security Council to shoulder its responsibilities has prompted the General Assembly to fulfil its mandate under the Charter of the United Nations to preserve international peace and security, and that is what the Assembly has gratefully done.

The suffering of the Palestinian people has become a testing ground for Israel's poisonous actions inspired by the law of the jungle. Palestinian sorrow has become a rich substance used in cheap political exchanges and dehumanizing prevarications. While the

West cries over a Holocaust that it caused, incited and committed, we find that it is now in the process of attempting to cover up another holocaust committed by Israel against the Palestinian people. What obvious hypocrisy and what a shameful moral failure! Let them stop promoting their lies about oases of democracy and the principles of human rights. Let them halt their conspiracy against the Sudan, Zimbabwe, Myanmar, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Iraq, especially given the fact that these extremist partners in crime are promoting regrettable propaganda to the effect that Israel is fighting in Gaza against Palestinian women and children in defence of the values of what it calls the "free world".

Despite the stark clarity of the United Nations Charter in condemning foreign occupation, acts of aggression and racial discrimination, and despite irrefutable facts and testimony by senior officials and United Nations rapporteurs proving that Israel is violating international law, international humanitarian law, the Fourth Geneva Convention, the United Nations Charter and even the conditions of membership in the United Nations, certain States have consecrated the upholding of Israel above the heritage of humanitarian law and have immunized the rulers of Israel, since the establishment of the State of Israel, against any legal or criminal prosecution or accountability before the law for the crimes and massacres committed against the Palestinian people for decades.

If the Security Council is unable to assume the grave responsibilities entrusted to it under the Charter, the General Assembly must, under the circumstances, hold the Security Council accountable for its failure, even paralysis, in addressing the suffering of people throughout the world. The Council must be held accountable for its lack of democracy and transparency when addressing international crises that truly threaten international peace and security and for its stark selectivity, verging on racial discrimination and superiority, when addressing certain issues involving the international community.

The international community, if we can assume that it does exist, is called upon to hold the leaders of Israel accountable for repeated crimes described under the law as war crimes, crimes against humanity and crimes of genocide. As such, the Security Council, the Human Rights Council and all other specialized organs established to protect and promote human rights are duty-bound to hold Israeli leaders accountable and to

punish them for committing war crimes. Here, we wish to recall that the Human Rights Council, which is only three years old, has held four special sessions to address Israel's terrorist behaviour against the Palestinian people.

Just a few days ago, the Council adopted a resolution calling for an international fact-finding mission to investigate Israeli violations of international human rights law in Gaza. Regrettably, many of the States that sing the praises of human rights abstained in the voting on the resolution, while one State chose to vote against it. Allowing the Israeli leaders — killers of women and children — to remain at large will intensify the frustration and hatred that result from the perception by the people of the world that double standards are being used when that issue is addressed. It would also lead to a collapse of the foundations of international law and the organization of collective international action. The United Nations must therefore bring the criminals to justice in order to preserve the remaining credibility of the international community and its institutions.

Hear me clearly. When the leader of an Israeli terrorist party, Avigdor Lieberman, calls for a nuclear bomb to be dropped on Gaza to erase it from the map, it should be noted that that terrorist has held a ministerial post in the past and that he is currently the leader of the Israeli Beiteinu party, which is part of the current governmental coalition that participated in the criminal decisions leading to the situation in Israel today. Thieves take refuge in the night in order to commit their crimes. Criminals of the daylight use gangs to protect themselves from the rule of law and then take refuge in the moral bankruptcy that has befallen those who are entrusted with the implementation of international law.

Finally, we wish to encourage the presidency to submit a draft resolution that will summarize today's important discussion and express the positions of principle held by delegations on the need for the Assembly to shoulder its responsibility following the failure of the Security Council to do so in order to save the Palestinian people in Gaza from Israel's acts of aggression and to protect the martyred people from its failure to fulfil the hopes entrusted to it under the Charter.

The peace we desire in our region is a true image of peace. Everyone who seeks to promote security must

seek the establishment of a just, comprehensive and genuine peace based on something that is known to all — the resolutions of international legitimacy — and on giving rights to those who are entitled to them. Unfortunately, there is no leader in Israel who is truly ready for peace and who has the true political will and vision to build a just and comprehensive peace.

Mrs. Viotti (Brazil): The words "appalling", "desperate" and "unbearable" have been used by independent observers and United Nations officials to describe the situation in Gaza. The unprecedented nature of the crisis, its increasing gravity and the failure of the parties to the conflict to comply with Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) make this session necessary and timely. We thank you, Mr. President, for your initiative.

My Delegation participated in the debate held last week in the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question. On that occasion, I had the opportunity to express Brazil's views on the current crisis in Gaza and southern Israel. Yesterday, during the Security Council's debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, Brazil called for the full and immediate implementation of resolution 1860 (2009), especially an immediate ceasefire, the opening of crossings into Gaza, the full withdrawal of Israeli forces and the resumption of efforts to achieve a negotiated solution to the conflict.

Today we were deeply disturbed to learn of the Israeli attack on the United Nations compound, the third attack on a United Nations facility after the shelling of United Nations schools used as safe havens last week resulted in 43 deaths. We join the Secretary-General in expressing our shock and outrage. This ongoing violence cannot continue. Full accountability must be ensured.

The death toll in Gaza continues to climb at a staggering rate. It is now above 1,000, among whom an unacceptably high proportion are civilians. The number of injured exceeds 4,000. Civilians are terrorized, traumatized and feeling trapped and helpless in a deadly rage of violence and destruction. The cessation of hostilities is the only answer to this horrific crisis. The killing must stop, and it must stop now.

We commend the outstanding work done by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs under the leadership of Under-Secretary-General John Holmes and the admirable dedication of the United

Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in the most trying of circumstances. We are encouraged by the fact that United Nations humanitarian aid, briefly interrupted after convoys were fired at, could be resumed after reassurances given by Israel were considered credible. Brazil has sought to contribute to this effort by sending 14 tons of food and medicine.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Brazil, Mr. Celso Amorim, has just concluded a visit to the region, where he spoke to leaders and his counterparts in Syria, Israel, Jordan, the Palestinian National Authority and Egypt. He left even more convinced that an immediate ceasefire is imperative. It is the only way to avoid further loss of innocent lives and to allow for substantial and adequate provision of urgently needed assistance.

The international community cannot allow Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) to go unheeded while innocent civilians are being killed in large numbers, thousands are injured and Gaza's infrastructure is destroyed. The credibility of our Organization and of its Security Council is at risk, with consequences that reach far beyond the present crisis. This Assembly must demand that both parties heed the call for an immediate ceasefire and fully implement resolution 1860 (2009). It is imperative to break the logic of violence, force and fear and inaugurate a cycle of dialogue, diplomacy and peace.

Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, allow me at the outset to extend our heartfelt thanks for the valuable efforts you have made to convene this special session in the light of the critical and tragic circumstances inflicted upon the Palestinian population of Gaza. We align ourselves with the statements made by the representatives of Morocco on behalf of the Group of Arab States, Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and Uganda on behalf of the member States of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

The Gaza Strip is still covered by a thick layer of clouds billowing from the fiercest bombardment and destruction that has taken place since Israel, the occupying Power, began its military campaign. The Israeli occupation forces have killed more than 1,000 Palestinian civilians, including at least 350 infants and children and 180 women. They have injured more than

4,850 civilians, some of them seriously, and among them at least 100 infants and children.

Those horrific numbers of victims highlight the seriousness of the situation being endured by the Palestinian civilian population in Gaza, particularly by children and their families. Entire families have been wiped out, buried alive under the rubble of homes that collapsed after being hit with rockets and artillery.

The Palestinian people in Gaza are living in a constant state of fear that will have short- and long-term impacts on their lives, particularly in the light of the worsening critical humanitarian situation, as already stated by the reports of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and UNICEF.

The vicious Israeli aggression against the Gaza Strip has entered its twentieth day. The Israeli forces intensified their onslaught on civilian targets in one of the most densely populated areas in the world. They have used prohibited substances, including white phosphorus, which causes deep burns and has resulted in the deaths of many Palestinians. Those phosphorus bombs have started fires that could not be extinguished and caused long-term environmental damage.

This Israeli behaviour constitutes a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law and international human rights law. Furthermore, Israel has officially blocked the implementation of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), which, *inter alia*, calls on it to cease fire immediately.

Israel has also ignored the Human Rights Council resolution adopted at its ninth special session (A/HRC/S-9/L.1), which calls on Israel to stop targeting civilians and civilian facilities, including educational, health and cultural buildings protected under international law.

We in the State of Qatar, like many other peoples and countries of the world, are pained to see pictures of Palestinian victims in Gaza. They are permanently imprinted on our memory. How can we forget the image of that little girl who was buried under the rubble, with only her head showing like a puppet of flesh and bones? Such pictures vividly illustrate a tragedy that reflects the unimaginable reality of the Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip. Where are the legal mechanisms related to children, women and

persons with disabilities? What is being done about the crimes committed against those people in Gaza?

The massacres committed in Gaza constitute war crimes that warrant an independent international investigation to bring the perpetrators to justice. In this context, we welcome the resolution of the Human Rights Council, adopted on 12 January, calling on the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the two Special Rapporteurs of the United Nations, and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, to report on violations of the human rights of Palestinians in Gaza committed by Israel through its recent acts of aggression.

The resolution also calls for dispatching an independent fact-finding mission to investigate the crimes committed against the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip during this aggression. It further requests the Secretary-General to undertake an independent investigation on the attacks against the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East schools that claimed the lives of children and adults alike.

These recent tragic events prompted His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, to address a second speech to the international community on the evening of 14 January, in which he called for action to be taken to hold Israel accountable before national and international tribunals for the war crimes and crimes against humanity that it has perpetrated. His Highness also launched an initiative to establish a fund for the reconstruction of Gaza and announced a \$250-million contribution by the State of Qatar in support of the yet-to-be-created fund. His Highness also called for setting up a sea lift in which all the Arab countries would participate in order to transport humanitarian assistance to the Gaza Strip as soon as possible.

It is truly regrettable that some equate the criminal with the victim and justify the massacres committed against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip under the pretext of Israel's right to self-defence, turning a blind eye to all the war crimes committed by Israel in the Gaza Strip, while at the same time calling for the implementation of international humanitarian law and human rights law and for the fight against impunity in other settings and situations. What about the right of the Palestinians to be protected, to live in peace and safety and to be free of occupation. What

about their right to self-determination, equity and justice and to punish those who have committed crimes against their sons and daughters?

Last but not least, the delegation of Qatar has come to this forum to appeal to the international community to act immediately to put an end to the Israeli crimes being committed in the Gaza Strip and to hold Israel accountable for its criminal acts against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip. We support a resolution that binds Israel to implement the resolutions of the United Nations and the Security Council, starting with the immediate implementation of resolution 1860 (2009), recently adopted by the Security Council. The credibility of that United Nations body is at stake, so let us act to restore credibility to that entity before it is too late.

Mr. Limeres (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would first like to thank you, Sir, for reconvening this emergency special session of the General Assembly on the grave situation in the Gaza Strip. On 7 January, at the open debate of the Security Council on this crisis, my country called on that organ urgently to assume its responsibilities by adopting a decision imposing an immediate and unconditional ceasefire and the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the Gaza Strip.

On 8 January, 12 days after the crisis began, the Security Council adopted its resolution 1860 (2009), which calls for an immediate, durable and fully respected ceasefire. Regrettably, one week after the adoption of that resolution by the organ of the United Nations responsible for maintaining international peace and security, resolution 1860 (2009) has yet to be implemented, resulting in the deterioration of the situation, in particular that of the Palestinian civilian population, in the Gaza Strip.

Therefore, at this emergency special session of the General Assembly, my country once again urges immediate compliance with the provisions of the Security Council resolution: an immediate and durable ceasefire leading to the full withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza, as well as the unimpeded provision and distribution of humanitarian assistance, including food, fuel and medical supplies.

In the light of paragraph 4 of resolution 1860 (2009), Argentina is sending 10 tons of humanitarian aid to assist the Palestinian population of the Gaza Strip, including medicine, other medical supplies, food and shelter supplies, to meet current needs in Gaza.

Today, 15 January, the first of several deliveries is leaving my country. They are to be stored by the Palestinian Ministry of Health in Ramallah, where they will be held until they can be sent to the Gaza Strip, pursuant not only to the needs there, but also to its real potential to reach the population.

In that context, my country would like to reiterate that the disproportionate response in the Gaza Strip has victimized the Palestinian civilian population. The unfortunate attacks on a hospital, a building housing the international media and the headquarters of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East are absolutely unacceptable, because they mainly affect the civilian population and seriously impede the efforts of the Organization and the international community to find a solution to the conflict.

I wish to stress the urgency of ensuring full respect for human rights and the obligations arising from international humanitarian law, in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 on the protection of civilians. A temporary ceasefire lasting three hours a day is clearly insufficient, as it does not contribute to alleviating the serious and urgent humanitarian needs of the Palestinian civilian population. In addition to an unconditional ceasefire, humanitarian corridors should be open so as to allow the sustained delivery of humanitarian aid, as established in paragraph 3 of resolution 1860 (2009).

The failure to establish an immediate and durable ceasefire has exacerbated the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip. As my country said yesterday at the Security Council open debate on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, the international community must urgently adopt measures to allow humanitarian aid to effectively reach the civilian population of Gaza, or run the risk of a rapid and serious exacerbation of the humanitarian crisis, which could affect more than 1.5 million Palestinians.

Mr. Benmehidi (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I wish to express the gratitude of my delegation to you, Sir, for having agreed to the request of Algeria and the majority of States Members of the Organization to reconvene the tenth emergency special session on Palestine. Your responsible, wise and timely decision makes a profound contribution to defending the credibility of the United Nations and to promoting the goals and objectives of the Charter. My delegation

remains convinced that, at the outcome of the tenth emergency special session, which should not be adjourned, the weight of the international community as a whole will compel the Israeli aggressor to listen to reason, after having decided deliberately to act beyond the pale of civilized nations.

My delegation would like to express to the Assembly the profound indignation of the people and the Government of Algeria in the face of the indescribable barbarism that the world has watched unfold in Gaza due to Israel's irredentism and the impunity it believes it can enjoy. Algeria most strongly condemns the Israeli aggression and categorically rejects the argument that that savage and disproportionate aggression, which violates the Charter, international law, international humanitarian law and international legality, constitutes an act of legitimate self-defence under Article 51 of the Charter.

Algeria wishes to recall that, even before the Israeli aggression had been unleashed, the Palestinian territory in Gaza was subject to an illegal and inhuman blockade, creating a disastrous situation that led the United Nations to note that none of the rights set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights were being respected there at a time when the sixtieth anniversary of the Declaration coincided with that of the Nakba, which marked the establishment of the Israeli entity. Ever since its establishment, that entity has never ceased to defy the international community and to violate all United Nations resolutions concerning it, in particular General Assembly resolution 181 (II) of 29 November 1947, which provided for its creation.

It is time that the international community consider ways and means to put an end to the arrogance and disregard for law shown by Israel, which seems to believe that it will be guaranteed impunity under any circumstances. It is time that its outlaw behaviour be treated as such and that the arsenal available to the international community be used against those responsible for that behaviour and their accomplices.

After the scandal of Gaza, the international community should no longer be afraid to address the legitimacy of Israel's membership in the United Nations. Resolution 273 (III) of 11 May 1949, whereby that entity was admitted to the Organization, states in its paragraph 1, "Decides that Israel is a peace-loving State which accepts the obligations contained in the

Charter and is able and willing to carry out those obligations". Is that the case today? The answer is clear: Israel is a bellicose entity that practices State terrorism, rejects the obligations contained in the Charter and is unwilling to carry out those obligations, as clearly stated by its leaders today and as demonstrated by its behaviour as an occupying Power for at least the past 40 years.

In addition to rejecting its Charter obligations, Israel has demonstrated that it has made it a State policy to violate international law and international humanitarian law, in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, all international human rights instruments and all international norms on the protection of civilians in armed conflict. Through the carnage that it has openly perpetrated in Gaza since 27 December 2008, Israel intends to defy the very foundations of international criminal justice by establishing crimes against humanity and war crimes as means of diplomatic pressure, while enjoying total impunity.

Algeria welcomes the position taken by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Human Rights Council's decision to set up an independent fact-finding commission to establish the facts concerning the massive human rights violations in Gaza. If the credibility of the United Nations has been undermined because of the Security Council's inability, for various reasons, to ensure an immediate end to the Israeli aggression, that credibility will be gauged in future by its efforts to combat impunity. In world opinion, such efforts are linked to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, whose promoters are being challenged in the same way as the United Nations.

Algeria welcomes the important statement that you made, Mr. President, at the opening meeting of the resumed tenth emergency special session. We fully share your expressed desire to see the United Nations address the extremely grave situation in Gaza by bringing together the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Secretary-General. Following the Council's adoption of resolution 1860 (2009) on 8 January 2009, Algeria rightly believed that that measure fell short of the expectations of the international community, which demands a total halt to the aggression and the immediate withdrawal of Israeli troops. Nonetheless, Algeria, respectful of the Charter,

believes that the resolution should be implemented immediately and unconditionally.

In that connection, Mr. President, we agree with the point of view that you expressed — and that the Secretary-General shares — regarding the need for an immediate ceasefire, which should not be conditioned on an end to the ongoing diplomatic efforts. Indeed, all diplomatic efforts and initiatives now under way should be supported by the international community. In that connection, my delegation would like to encourage you to submit to the General Assembly for its adoption a draft resolution focusing on the two main concerns that you expressed: the demand for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire and the immediate restoration of unimpeded humanitarian access. That, in our view, is the purpose of our meeting today under your wise and informed guidance.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): Thank you, Mr. President, for the resumption of the tenth emergency special session. Given the gravity of the situation and the dire humanitarian catastrophe being incrementally and brutally perpetrated by the Israeli military forces in the Gaza Strip, my delegation considers this resumed session most timely and attaches great importance to it. We commend you for your comprehensive statement this morning.

Bangladesh aligns itself with the statements made on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Non-Aligned Movement. In addition, we would like to highlight the following points.

Bangladesh strongly condemns the ongoing indiscriminate Israeli attacks in Gaza, which are now entering their fourth week. We are appalled by the scale and intensity of the devastation and by the deaths of innocent Palestinians, including women and children, caused by massive military attacks. The death toll has exceeded 1,000, and thousands more — most of them civilians — have been severely injured. There are painful reports that Gaza is running out of places to bury the dead. The killing of innocent Palestinian civilians is totally unacceptable under any circumstances.

We cannot and must not tolerate the ceaseless violation of international humanitarian law and international human rights law by the Israeli occupying forces. It is distressing to see that even humanitarian workers are being killed by the Israeli attacks. We were utterly disturbed to learn today that Gaza's United

Nations compound — a universal symbol of unity and peace — is not safe from the occupying forces. We strongly condemn these heinous actions of the Israeli Government, which are blatant violations of international law.

Bangladesh calls for an immediate halt to the Israeli attacks, which are causing innumerable civilian deaths and the massive destruction of infrastructure in the Gaza Strip. Israel must comply with Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), adopted on 8 January. The United Nations, in particular the Security Council, must undertake all measures necessary to immediately ensure the full and effective implementation of resolution 1860 (2009). Border crossings should be ensured forthwith for persons and goods. Humanitarian workers must be guaranteed full and secure access to the Palestinian population, who are in dire need of food, medicine, water, electricity and shelter.

Mr. Mohamad (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): Three weeks have now elapsed since the settler colonial authorities in occupied Palestine launched their criminal campaign killing women, children and elderly people in cold blood and destroying property. They are defying all humanitarian principles and displaying contempt for the United Nations.

A few days after ejecting the Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation, Israel bombed a school run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), killing children who had taken refuge there. This is no surprise since it was Israel, the occupying Power, that killed Count Bernadette, the United Nations envoy, decades ago. It was the same occupying Power that has been flagrantly violating all United Nations resolutions and international legal instruments.

History is repeating itself. What we see in Gaza today reminds us of previous times under the apartheid regime in South Africa. At that time we had Soweto and Sharpeville and today we have Sabra and Shatila, Qana, Khan Yunis, Dair Yasin, Jenin, Hayy al-Zaytoun and other towns. If the apartheid regime was the aggressor against African frontline States in the past, then today Israel is the aggressor against Lebanon and continues to occupy the Syrian Golan Heights. We repeat: history is repeating itself. If the apartheid regime in South Africa justified itself by referring to the Cuban presence in Angola, then Israel is justifying itself by claiming it is responding to stone-throwing by

children, who are simply resisting occupation. There is no comparison between those who kill and those who are killed.

The General Assembly has lost patience and must demand forcefully an end to the massacre of the Palestinian people, the bloodshed and the terror campaign against women, children and the elderly. The blockade must be lifted to allow access for humanitarian assistance to the people of Gaza.

Those who speak of genocide and impunity must now tell us what they are going to do about the crimes perpetrated by the Israeli occupying Power in Gaza. Those who speak of the responsibility to protect must also tell us what they are going to do about those crimes. The Assembly must forcefully demand that the occupation end and that an independent Palestinian State be created, with Jerusalem as its capital. Otherwise, the days of suffering of the Palestinian people will always be Gaza days.

We thank you, Sir, for your interest and support for the Palestinian cause and people since assuming the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-third session. We are proud of you and of your efforts, as we are also proud of the support shown by millions of people for the suffering Palestinian people. That is the best support that can be given to them as they wait for freedom and independence.

Mr. Al-Jarman (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to express the gratitude of my delegation for the prompt response to our call to reconvene the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly to consider illegal Israeli actions in occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory, and especially the situation in Gaza over the past 20 days. My delegation wishes to thank the Deputy Secretary-General for her important statement on the situation in Gaza (see A/ES-10/PV.32). My delegation also supports the statements made by the representative of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and by the representative of Morocco on behalf of the Arab Group.

The United Arab Emirates condemns the barbaric aggression by Israel, the occupying Power, against civilians in the Gaza Strip, which has continued since 27 December 2008 and which has made use of excessive force and internationally banned weapons to bomb civilian homes and destroy infrastructure. Israel is besieging unarmed inhabitants and has caused the

deaths of more than 1,000 persons — 40 per cent of them women and children — and has wounded more than 5,000, half of them women and children. Tens of thousands have been displaced. These numbers continue to grow each day.

In addition, obstacles have been put in place to delay the delivery of internal and international humanitarian and medical assistance to the injured and the displaced, including women, children, the elderly and the disabled. This exacerbates the suffering of the victims in an inhumane manner and places the region on the verge of an intolerable and unacceptable humanitarian catastrophe. In addition to the threats to international peace and security, we are gravely concerned at the ongoing violence and the human suffering of the people of Gaza. We express our solidarity with them and their plight, and we stand ready to deploy all possible efforts to alleviate their suffering and put an end to their tragedy.

We meet today following Israel's refusal, again, to comply with Security Council resolutions relevant to the Palestinian question, the most recent of which is Council resolution 1860 (2009) of 8 January, in addition to its flagrant violations of international law and international humanitarian law. We call upon the Security Council and the international community, including the General Assembly, to assume their responsibilities to maintain international peace and security and to protect Palestinian civilians.

In view of the catastrophe suffered by the inhabitants of Gaza, the United Arab Emirates calls on the international community to intensify its efforts to compel Israel to comply with Council resolution 1860 (2009), to put an end to the violence, to implement an immediate ceasefire, to lift the blockade and open the border crossings, to provide access for humanitarian and relief assistance to the inhabitants and to withdraw totally from Gaza. Israel must abide by the resolutions of international legitimacy and international humanitarian law and live up to its responsibilities as an occupying Power as stipulated in The Hague Conventions of 1899 and 1907 and in the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and their Additional Protocols.

We welcome the fact that resolution S-9/1, adopted by the Human Rights Council on 12 January 2009, calls for the urgent dispatch of an independent fact-finding mission to investigate Israel's violations of international law and international humanitarian law

against the Palestinian population in the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly in the Gaza Strip, and for bringing those responsible to justice. At the same time, we urge the international community and influential parties to press Israel to resume peace talks in order to reach a final settlement of the Palestinian question and the Middle East problem, on the basis of all relevant international resolutions.

We underscore that the international community and the specialized agencies and bodies of the United Nations should continue their efforts to effectively address the political, humanitarian, socio-economic and security repercussions of this crisis. The United Arab Emirates has assumed its humanitarian responsibilities both as a member of the group of donors to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and by working to provide urgent assistance to the Palestinian people in Gaza through an emergency meeting it hosted in Abu Dhabi on 13 January for donor countries, charitable organizations of the United Arab Emirates and other international humanitarian organizations, in order to coordinate the delivery of relief assistance to the population of Gaza and to rehabilitate important educational, health and other infrastructure.

In this respect, it is our hope that the positive diplomatic initiatives and international and regional efforts that are currently being deployed will put an end to the tragic situation in Gaza, provide relief to the civilian population, bring about the resumption of the peace talks between all of the concerned parties, and bring an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Tomorrow is going to be a rather difficult day. It is going to be freezing, dangerous, with lots of ice; it will be a sacrifice to go outdoors. I have some good boots that a colleague has given me; I will be wearing them. But I do ask delegates, please, to make that sacrifice, because none of our sacrifices can compare to the suffering of our brothers and sisters in Gaza. They need a voice of hope. So please let us all be here tomorrow, and let us all participate in adopting the draft resolution which has so far garnered very widespread support.

We will meet tomorrow at 10 a.m., and be careful with the cold.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.



General Assembly

Emergency Special Session

34th meeting

Friday, 16 January 2009, 10 a.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. D'Escoto Brockmann (Nicaragua)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 5 (continued)

Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Draft resolution (A/ES-10/L.21)

The President: Brothers and sisters, we have many speakers on the list. I am going to beg everyone to please not feel obliged to read out their entire statement, but to give only a summary, as the texts of their statements will be circulated in full. That is so that we may take action today. As I said yesterday, it is the least we can do for our brothers and sisters who are living in a veritable inferno in Gaza. We want to send them a message today — tomorrow is too far away. One person said maybe on Monday, but that would be a failure of the Assembly. We have to act quickly. The consensus among those who have already spoken is evident.

As members know, there is an official draft resolution that has been circulating since yesterday, and we want to take action on it today — certainly no later than 6 p.m., and if before, then all the better. I plead with all members not to feel obliged to read out their entire prepared statement, as the full texts will be officially circulated, but to give a synopsis so that we can move ahead and take action on the draft resolution.

Mr. Tuah (Brunei Darussalam): On behalf of the Brunei Darussalam delegation, I would like to thank you, Sir, for convening this meeting of great

importance to respond to the current crisis in and around the Gaza Strip.

Brunei Darussalam is deeply concerned with the deteriorating situation in and around Gaza. The deaths of more than a thousand innocent Palestinians, the injuries suffered by thousands more and the massive destruction of their homes and infrastructure highlight the gravity of the situation.

We add our voice to those condemning the continued excessive use of force by Israel and call on all sides to exercise the utmost restraint. The escalation of violence in Gaza has further deprived the Palestinian people, who have already endured suffering due to the blockades. These recent developments have undermined the gains that the international community has made in order to bring about a just, peaceful and permanent solution to the conflict.

The international community is called upon once again to act decisively and show leadership at this crucial juncture. Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) has sent a clear message for an immediate, durable and fully respected ceasefire, called for the sustained reopening of the crossing points, urged the provision of humanitarian assistance without restriction to those in need and welcomed all regional and international efforts under way to achieve a comprehensive peace. This important resolution must be observed.

Let us also not lose sight of the root cause of this conflict, which is the suffering of Palestinian people and their efforts to regain their lost homeland. In believing that the two-State solution is the only viable

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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option in this conflict, Brunei Darussalam hopes that all parties will be able to work towards this goal. In this regard, we recognize the untiring commitment and readiness of Member States that have come forward to help seek a negotiated solution.

Brunei Darussalam reiterates its long-standing commitment to the rule of international law under the auspices of the United Nations and adds its voice to all those calling for the utmost restraint by both sides.

Once again, we thank you, Sir, for convening this special session, thus providing an opportunity for the wider membership of the United Nations to exchange views on the grave situation in Gaza to further help regional and international efforts to achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the region.

Mr. Wolfe (Jamaica): The situation that has caused us to assemble here today in this resumed tenth emergency special session is indeed beyond a doubt regrettable. It has been exactly one week since the adoption by the Security Council of resolution 1860 (2009), which called for an immediate, durable and fully respected ceasefire. To date, what we have seen is an escalation in violence and the continued reckless killing of Palestinian civilians and the maiming of others, including defenceless women and children, and the destruction of property and infrastructure, including the United Nations compound.

The Government of Jamaica is extremely concerned at the escalation of the conflict in Gaza. We obviously recognize Israel's right to protect its citizens. We are, however, horrified at the disproportionate and excessive use of force and the blatant disregard for the safety of innocent civilians on the part of the Israeli Government.

We are no less concerned about the indiscriminate firing of rockets over many weeks into Israeli territory by Palestinian militants. This cycle of violence and retaliation impedes efforts and thwarts initiatives aimed at brokering lasting peace in the region.

Jamaica is appalled at the horrific tragedy unfolding on the ground, which, according to the chief of emergency medical services in Gaza, has now killed over 1,000 Palestinians — more than half of them civilians — and wounded 4,500, many of whom are women and children.

We believe it timely to reiterate our support for Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) and urge both

sides to fully and expeditiously implement the ceasefire — a ceasefire that is durable and fully respected and that will facilitate the unimpeded provision and distribution of aid in order to alleviate the suffering and worsening humanitarian situation in Gaza. Jamaica is naturally encouraged by and welcomes the ongoing Egyptian efforts aimed at achieving a ceasefire and the mediation efforts of Egypt and the League of Arab States to realize intra-Palestinian reconciliation.

History has demonstrated that there can be no military solution to this conflict. A people's rights and legitimate aspirations cannot be suppressed indefinitely. Jamaica continues its call for all parties to pursue diplomatic efforts in order to ensure the peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In this regard, we call for the resumption of negotiations aimed at arriving at a permanent solution that would guarantee Israel's security and the right of Palestinians to statehood, in keeping with Security Council resolutions, in particular resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), which call on Israel to withdraw to its pre-1967 borders.

Finally, we have taken careful note, Mr. President, of your indication regarding a draft resolution, which you have prepared, for action on it today. My delegation would lend its full efforts to ensure that we can in fact adopt that resolution.

Mr. Maurer (Switzerland) (spoke in French): The current situation in Gaza is dramatic. Only an immediate halt to hostilities by all parties to the conflict can put an end to this tragedy in which so many people have died and so many people have been wounded, and which has caused so much suffering.

Switzerland reiterates its appeal for an immediate cessation of both the rocket attacks against Israel and the Israeli military operation. It welcomes the resolution adopted by the Security Council and calls on the parties to act on it without delay. We also welcome the international efforts to achieve a ceasefire, and we strongly encourage all parties to the conflict to respond to them favourably. An immediate ceasefire and the provision of humanitarian aid are, however, only the first essential steps. They must be accompanied and followed up by a political process and a dialogue between all the parties to the conflict.

In this ongoing armed conflict, we would like to emphasize the following three aspects that we consider

to be especially important and that warrant immediate attention.

First, it is once again civilians, including children, who are bearing the brunt of the fighting. Access to medical care for the wounded and humanitarian access to the civilian population are essential to saving lives, evacuating and caring for the wounded and restoring a minimum level of human dignity. The disruption of water supplies requires immediate work to prevent this already very serious situation from deteriorating even further.

The current circumstances are making the work of humanitarian agencies very difficult. We urge all parties to the conflict to fulfil their obligations under international humanitarian law in order to permit swift and unimpeded humanitarian access to the wounded and the needy and to ensure the protection of humanitarian workers. In that context, Switzerland was particularly shocked by the recent news of the bombing of United Nations facilities in Gaza.

Secondly, thousands of people are currently displaced in the Gaza Strip. Those persons, whose numbers are growing, must be protected and supported. They have the right to seek safety elsewhere in the territory or to leave.

Thirdly, all parties to the conflict must comply strictly with their obligations under international law. That includes the obligation to meticulously respect the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution in order to ensure the greatest possible protection of civilians and their property, as well as the protection of medical personnel, hospitals and other health facilities. For Switzerland, it is of the utmost importance that those three humanitarian considerations be appropriately reflected in a General Assembly draft resolution.

There are many allegations that violations of international law have been committed during this conflict. As it had the opportunity to do in the Human Rights Council on Monday, Switzerland reiterates its call for an impartial inquiry into all allegations of violations committed by all parties during the hostilities.

Switzerland remains convinced that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict cannot be resolved by military means. Only negotiations aimed at the establishment of a viable Palestinian State, living side by side with an

internationally recognized State of Israel within secure borders, can bring about a lasting solution to this persistent conflict.

Mr. Valero Briceño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): At this important debate, the delegation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela wishes to make an announcement that we consider important. In response to the policy of genocide adopted by the Government of Israel against the Palestinian people, and given the crimes against humanity committed by its political and military elite in the Gaza Strip, its repeated use of State terrorism and the refusal of its Government to abide by Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, in keeping with the principles of peace and solidarity that guide its foreign policy, has decided to break diplomatic relations with the State of Israel.

The human tragedy in the Gaza Strip is Dantean. Thousands of dead and wounded are the toll of Israel's bloody occupation of the Gaza Strip. In that caravan of death, it is women and children who are most vulnerable.

The occupying Power, Israel, persistently violates article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, imposing collective punishments on the population of the occupied Palestinian territory, using indiscriminate and excessive force against civilians, destroying electricity and water distribution networks, bombing public buildings and restricting freedom of movement. Those actions against the lives, families, health, nutrition and psychological well-being of Palestinians are flagrant examples of collective punishment. The Israeli aggression has caused the largest forced displacement of Palestinians since 1967. International organizations and doctors working in the Gaza Strip have detected uranium residues on victims and have reported that Israel is using white phosphorous bombs in densely populated areas, which is undoubtedly a violation of international humanitarian law.

The actions of the State of Israel seek to subjugate the Palestinian people by exterminating them. That is genocide. Crimes against humanity have been committed and cannot go unpunished. The International Criminal Court or a special tribunal have the responsibility to act at this moment in history.

The Security Council, after a disturbing period of paralysis, adopted resolution 1860 (2009), in which it

calls for an immediate, durable and fully respected ceasefire, leading to the full withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza, and for the unimpeded distribution of humanitarian assistance throughout Gaza. However, the Israeli political and military elite pursues its acts of genocide in Gaza and confidently declares that it will not comply with resolution 1860 (2009).

The Israeli Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert, has stated that he rejects the resolution because he considers it impossible to implement and claims that the operations will continue. Indeed, they have continued and have now also struck major United Nations facilities in Gaza, causing numerous and tragic deaths. He says, "Israel has never agreed to external forces determining its right to defend its citizens". In other words, he brazenly and clearly refuses, in broad daylight, to comply with the Security Council resolution. A Deputy Prime Minister of Israel says openly, "Nothing will happen if this resolution remains dead letter. Our interest is all that matters." What brazen unwillingness to comply with international law and with the Council resolution!

The Government of Israel claims it is exercising its legitimate right to self-defence when in fact it is carrying out an indiscriminate and disproportionate attack against the Palestinian people before the eyes of the world. The Israeli Government's arguments are untenable. In a 2004 ruling on the construction of the Israeli wall in Palestine, the International Court of Justice rejected the argument of legitimate self-defence invoked by Israel. The fact is that it is not possible to speak of legitimate self-defence when the violence is carried out by Israel against a people and a territory that are subject to its cruel occupation.

Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people did not begin on 27 December 2008 because Israel has never stopped being an occupying Power. The actions we are witnessing are neither isolated nor random. Rather, they are part of a plan designed at the time the Israeli State came into being to expel and exterminate the Palestinian citizens from their land with the open and perverse support of imperial Powers.

The Israeli Government's punitive measures are part of a deliberate strategy to make it impossible for the Palestinian people to effectively exercise its right of self-determination. In this context, it undertakes military actions to effect the tragic ethnic cleansing of this Arab people.

The Israeli warmongers decided not to recognize the legitimate right of an independent Palestinian State to exist, as stipulated in resolution 181 (II). What they seek, in any case, is to decimate the population so that it accepts any decision that is the product of terror and of military, technological and numerical force.

The ongoing military siege by air, sea and land imposed on the Palestinian people, including the closure of the six land border crossings that connect Gaza to Egypt, the West Bank and Israel, are reminiscent of the disgraceful practice of apartheid.

The preferred targets of genocide by the political and military elite of Israel in the Gaza Strip are civilian — mosques and universities, schools and homes, hospitals and medical warehouses, factories and the media. Israel obstructs the entry of humanitarian aid, and even bombs schools and United Nations convoys of humanitarian aid, as we have seen in recent days. It is time to reiterate that there are universally recognized human rights the validity of which cannot be suspended, even in the event of armed conflict.

Faced with this criminal policy, with these violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law, and with the flouting of hundreds of resolutions of the General Assembly and Security Council concerning Palestine, and particularly resolution 1860 (2009), what will this emergency special session of the General Assembly do? How can the United Nations be party to the massacre of the Palestinian people and not take effective decisions to stop it? How much more suffering will be needed to make world leaders aware of what is happening?

This session of the General Assembly is an historic opportunity to adopt a resolution that embodies humanity's overwhelming desire for peace. It is necessary to say that in the light of Israel's disregard for resolution 1860 (2009), Venezuela welcomes the convening of this emergency special session of the General Assembly as a genuine expression of the 192 countries that make up the United Nations. We have been fortunate that the request of the Non-Aligned Movement to the President of the General Assembly, Father Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, to reconvene this session was received and acted upon. As representatives know and as Father d'Escoto Brockmann has explained, Venezuela, Malaysia and Indonesia had requested the President of the General

Assembly to reconvene this emergency special session. This meeting is therefore a golden opportunity for this forum to express the expectations and the hopes of the peoples of the world.

In 2004, the International Court of Justice stated that, while the Security Council has the primary responsibility for maintaining peace, it does not act alone; rather, that responsibility is shared by the General Assembly.

Our delegation has supported the proposal for the President of the General Assembly to submit for the Assembly's consideration a draft resolution on the item before us today. We wish to acknowledge the President's courage in reconvening this session, bearing in mind the desperate attempts made by some countries, including Israel, to sabotage that effort.

We also wish to acknowledge the importance of the draft resolution submitted to us by the President of the General Assembly. We believe it forms the foundation for a broad agreement. We place great value in Father Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann's efforts. An exceptional Nicaraguan, he is a man committed to the causes of the peoples of the world, striving to achieve solid consensus.

Allow me to speak here with perfect clarity. We believe that it would be advisable to bear in mind the suggestions that have been made by various delegations, including that of Venezuela, that the draft resolution be enriched and strengthened. We therefore suggest that the following points be taken into account.

We must demand that Israel, the occupying Power, immediately and unconditionally comply with resolution 1860 (2009). We must demand the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Israeli military forces from the Gaza Strip. Should that not happen, the delivery of humanitarian aid would be impossible because the criminal Israeli army holds complete control of the land, sea and air access to all points of the Gaza Strip, a topographically limited area controlled in the most savage and bloodthirsty manner by an army that is among the most powerful in the world.

We must call on all States Members of the United Nations and the international community to take part in the rebuilding of Gaza. To that end, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela welcomes initiatives such as those of His Royal Highness the Emir of Qatar, who

has announced a sizeable financial contribution, and of the Governments of Brunei Darussalam, Brazil and Argentina, which are also willing to send humanitarian aid.

We must demand that Israel, the occupying Power, lift the economic and military blockade on the occupied territory of Gaza and that Israel immediately reopen the border crossings with the Gaza Strip to allow access to humanitarian aid and the free movement of people. With regard to humanitarian aid, we must urge UNICEF and all related institutions to implement an aid programme for Palestinian children and teenagers affected by the trauma of war.

Lastly, we must support Human Rights Council resolution S-9/1 of 12 January 2009 on the grave violations of human rights after the occupation of Palestine, including the recent occupation of the Gaza region. The Human Rights Council was created by United Nations statute. It could be called a favourite child of this institution, for it focuses specifically on matters in this area. The least the General Assembly could do is to welcome and commend that resolution. Furthermore, fundamental elements for a resolution of this emergency special session of the General Assembly can be found in the important and essential statement issued by the Non-Aligned Movement on 13 January. We also wish to underscore the importance of the proposal from the President of the General Assembly.

At any rate, the Assembly resolution should be adopted today, for this is no time for delays. It is a time to take humanitarian and political action in the Assembly. We commend all the good offices that may be brought to bear during this crucial moment in history by our President, Father Miguel d'Escoto, who has the full trust of this body and, in particular, the complete trust of the people and Government led by Hugo Chávez Frías.

Given the shortcomings of the Security Council, it is necessary to push for a true reform of the United Nations so that the General Assembly — and for this reason, this event should be welcomed — as the expression of the manifold interests of the international community, would have the power to guide global affairs concerning international peace and security.

In the context of the United Nations reform process, it is necessary for the General Assembly, as a universal and representative body of the international

community, to have the decision-making power in global matters. The current structure of the United Nations has collapsed, and it does not reflect the changes that history is demanding. It represents the agreements that were knit together after the Second World War. We are witnessing the splitting of the unipolar model and the emergence of a multipolar world, in which the equality of nations is the predominant feature.

We must demand that Israel, the occupying Power, meet its obligations within the framework of international humanitarian law, particularly international human rights law. Israel's political and military elite repeatedly violate the resolutions of this body. It has always placed itself on the margin of international law, used State terrorism and systematically resorted to war as a policy of expansion and a tool to persecute the Palestinian people. The Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela will therefore urge the international community to denounce the crimes against humanity committed by Israel before the International Criminal Court or a special tribunal.

The solidarity of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and its President, Hugo Chávez Frías, with the Palestinian people goes beyond political discourse. In that sense, I wish to inform the Assembly that humanitarian aid has already been sent to the Palestinian people, and the Egyptian Government has offered its good offices to see that it reaches those for whom it is intended, the people of Gaza. The first lot of this humanitarian aid arrived in Egypt just a few hours ago and includes 13 tons of medical supplies to help the injured Palestinian civilians. The second lot will be sent in the next few days and will include 80 tons of non-perishable food. Also, planes from the Venezuelan air force will be crossing the seas, covering thousands of kilometres to bring help from the Venezuelan people to the people of Gaza. Furthermore, Venezuela plans to send medical personnel and civil servants who are highly specialized in rescue and aid operations.

Allow me to conclude my remarks with a brief thought. We have before us the moral responsibility to give the world a lesson in humanity and to recover the hope that has nearly been lost, that a more just and honourable world is possible. Insane violence can lead to the dehumanization of societies and turn them animalistic. That is happening today. Only the clamour of the peoples can break the vicious cycle of war. Only

the peoples' condemnation of intolerance and irrationality can stem this thirst for crazy violence. The General Assembly must have its say.

Mr. Ettalhi (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, my delegation wishes to express its deep appreciation for your call, Sir, to hold this meeting to consider the unjust Israeli aggression against Gaza.

I begin by aligning my delegation with the statements of the representative of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, the representative of Uganda on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the representative of Morocco on behalf of the Arab Group. I will read out a brief summary of my statement, the full text of which has been circulated.

Facts concerning the causes of the current situation in the Gaza Strip have been distorted and falsified. Those distortions caused many well-intentioned people to become confused, and many also became convinced that the Palestinians of Gaza were the direct cause of the situation, while disregarding the fact that the roots of the problem are in the occupation, which has continued for more than four decades, accompanied by various Israeli practices that include killings, arrests, displacements, expropriation of territory, destruction of homes, establishment of settlements and methodical aggression by Israeli authorities and settlers. All such practices are intended to compel Palestinians to leave Palestine, in continuation of what the Israelis have been doing since 1948.

The occupation and those practices are the root causes of what is occurring now. However, let us also briefly consider its immediate cause. In mid-2007, the Israeli occupation authorities, as is widely known, imposed a blockade on the Gaza Strip, isolating it and depriving it of food. In June 2008, a so-called truce was declared between the Palestinians and the Israelis. The truce was supposed to last for six months, during which time each party would refrain from any act of violence against the other. The Israelis promised that they would open the border crossings to allow the free movement of goods into and out of Gaza, thus providing for a return to the status quo that existed prior to 2005.

The Palestinians abided strictly by the truce. Unfortunately, the Israelis did not honour their

commitments, breaking the truce more than 190 times. They partially opened certain border crossings and restricted the amount of goods allowed to move into and out of Gaza to less than 20 per cent of the amount permitted prior to June 2007, causing an unprecedented deterioration in the population's economic and living conditions. Yet the Palestinian resistance continued to comply with the truce.

On 4 November 2008, without any provocation from the Palestinian side, the Israelis carried out a military incursion into Gaza, killing six Palestinians. So was it not natural that the Palestinians should try to defend themselves with whatever means were available to them? Then, on 5 November, the Israelis imposed a total blockade on the Gaza Strip, depriving it of all of life's necessities, including food, medicine, goods and fuel. That led to the current situation, which is characterized in particular by a lack of many essential medicines and a lack of potable water for more than 70 per cent of the population, sewage flowing through the streets, a complete shutdown of factories and rampant poverty and hunger. Can there be a more cruel and horrible aggression than to deprive a people of what it needs to survive? Is it not the right of Palestinians to defend themselves with whatever means available to them?

The events that began on 27 December 2008 then followed, when the Israelis began to commit indiscriminate acts of killing and destruction. In front of the eyes of the entire world, they killed innocent civilians, including women, children, doctors, nurses, humanitarian personnel and journalists, wiping out entire families and injuring thousands; they prevented medical teams from reaching victims before they died from loss of blood; they destroyed homes, houses of worship and educational institutions; they bombed hospitals and even United Nations facilities; and they fired on ambulances and humanitarian assistance convoys — all of which was witnessed by the International Committee of the Red Cross and the United Nations. They attacked residential areas with phosphorus bombs, which burn everything they touch.

Despite the adoption of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), which calls for an immediate ceasefire, Israel has announced, through its Prime Minister and other officials, that it rejects the resolution. Indeed, in a clear challenge to the international community, Israel has escalated its criminal aggression.

The following, in the words of an eyewitness, is what is now occurring in Gaza:

"What Israel says it is doing in Gaza is waging a war against Hamas. The facts on the ground, however, are entirely different. This is a war between an army equipped with the most complex weapons and unarmed civilians who lack even shelters to protect themselves. It is a war against Gaza."

Israel's attack against the civilians in Gaza is definitely worse than any Nazi act and is unprecedented in history in terms of its horror and ugliness. Today, therefore, we call on the General Assembly to adopt a draft resolution that calls for an immediate and durable ceasefire, an immediate withdrawal of Israeli forces, an end to the blockade and the opening of all border crossings, that clearly denounces Israel's aggression and continued violation of international law, including international humanitarian law, and that reaffirms Human Rights Council resolution S-9/1, which calls for the establishment of a commission of inquiry to investigate the crimes and violations committed. We regard that as a minimum. However, for the sake of consensus, we support the draft resolution that you submitted, Mr. President, first and foremost as an expression of our appreciation for you and your noble position.

Mr. Al-Allaf (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): Permit me at the outset to express my gratitude and appreciation to you, Mr. President, for convening this resumption of the tenth emergency special session to discuss the Israeli aggression against the Gaza Strip and its catastrophic effects on the civilian population. Your well-known positions have shown your clear commitment to the noble purposes and principles of the United Nations. Since the first day of your tenure, you have sought to do justice and to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the General Assembly.

Jordan wishes to align itself with the statements made by the representative of Morocco on behalf of the Group of Arab States, by the representative of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and by the representative of Uganda on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

This resumption of the tenth emergency special session to discuss the situation in Gaza is a clear and full expression of the international community's rejection of the Israeli aggression against an unarmed

and besieged population. Jordan has denounced that aggression, which has claimed thousands of innocent civilian victims. Jordan calls once again on the international community to fulfil its political, legal and moral obligation to compel Israel to comply with Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) by ceasing forthwith all its military actions and its policy of collective punishment against Palestinian civilians, lifting the blockade, opening all border crossings and alleviating the catastrophic suffering caused by its military operations, which are in clear violation of international humanitarian law, the Fourth Geneva Convention, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and all relevant international instruments for the protection of civilians in armed conflict, particularly children and women.

Resolution 1860 (2009) clearly expressed the international consensus calling for an immediate and permanent ceasefire, which should be fully respected. It also expressed the need for a total withdrawal by Israeli forces from Gaza, the provision of humanitarian assistance, efforts to relieve the humanitarian and economic situation in the Gaza Strip and renewed efforts by the parties and the international community to achieve a peace based on a two-State solution, as envisioned in resolution 1850 (2008). This international consensus has international legitimacy now and a mandatory legal and moral political character that should be respected by all, especially Israel.

The leadership and people of Jordan are totally committed to supporting the Palestinian people in order to help put an end to their humanitarian suffering and achieve their basic rights, including the creation of an independent Palestinian State on national Palestinian soil. Since the start of this crisis, His Majesty King Abdullah has been carrying out intensive contacts with a number of his brotherly Arab leaders and regional and international political leaders in order to guarantee the immediate cessation of the aggression and the full compliance of all parties with resolution 1860 (2009). Jordan expresses its full support for the tireless and continued efforts of the sisterly Arab Republic of Egypt to achieve an immediate ceasefire and an end to the suffering of our Palestinian brothers and the protection of their rights.

The deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Gaza has reached unprecedented levels that offend the conscience of humankind. Killing and terrorizing acts

have become daily occurrences. This is all happening while the Israeli military machine continues its killings and its aggression, without paying any heed to the calls of the United Nations agencies and the International Committee of the Red Cross, which has described the depth and gravity of the tragedy in Gaza. The Israeli aggression, excessive and disproportionate use of military power and unjustified blockade of the Gaza Strip have destroyed all hopes for normal life there. Children, journalists, physicians — none have been safe from the Israeli aggression, which has destroyed facilities, public services, schools, universities, hospitals, houses of worship and even the buildings of United Nations agencies and United Nations depots for humanitarian and medical supplies.

The aggression must be followed by a serious and effective international effort to deal with the humanitarian catastrophe in the Gaza Strip, to rebuild it and to restore normal life to the people of Gaza. Jordan is completely committed to these efforts. His Majesty the King has ordered that Jordanian hospitals be opened for the service of our Palestinian brothers and that all possible resources be made available to them through medical assistance and the preparation of a military field hospital to be sent to Gaza to deal with patients and the injured. Jordan also expressed its willingness to provide all facilities to the United Nations institutions that are working there to deal with the consequences of the humanitarian catastrophe caused by the aggression and to launch an effective partnership with these institutions to guarantee the provision of all forms of support and assistance needed by our Palestinian brothers.

Jordan is also ready to help provide any international assistance via its territory at any time through the Hashemite charity organization, which works incessantly to help deliver assistance and units of blood to our brothers in Gaza. The assistance ordered by His Majesty to be sent to Gaza now totals 14 caravans, loaded with 2,311 tons of food aid and medical supplies. In addition, an air bridge has been provided to move 80,000 ready-to-eat meals to El-Arish airport, as a first stop on their way to the Gaza Strip, and to have them distributed through the World Food Programme.

Jordan also continues to provide delivery of assistance to Gaza from Arab, Islamic and Western States and continues its contacts with its partners in the European Union to find ways to use Jordan's

operational and logistical capabilities to provide assistance to Gaza through the Hashemite charity organizations, the national security centre and the national emergency management organization.

Peace and stability in the Middle East will not be achieved through military operations. It can be achieved only through dialogue and serious negotiations, which will give the legitimate Palestinian Authority the means to realize the aspirations of the Palestinian people to establish an independent, viable, contiguous State, with Jerusalem as its capital. A return to negotiations is the only way to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict on the basis of the relevant international terms of reference, including United Nations resolutions, the Road Map and the Arab Peace Initiative.

Israel's use of military might not only threaten the stability of the region, it also undermines efforts carried out by international parties to realize peace in the Middle East, as expressed in Security Council resolution 1850 (2008). It threatens the entire peace process seeking to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict on the basis of a two-State formula, which is a basic condition for achieving peace and stability in the region.

Once again, our delegation supports your efforts, Sir, in this tenth emergency special session, and we support the adoption of a General Assembly resolution to reinforce Security Council resolution 1860 (2009). Our delegation also expresses its readiness to carry out all efforts to facilitate the adoption of this resolution as soon as possible.

Mr. Wolfe (Jamaica), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Mr. Palihakkara (Sri Lanka): My delegation wishes to associate itself with the statement made by the Chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement expressing solidarity with the Palestinian people and outlining the collective views of the Movement on the grave humanitarian, security and political situation arising from the continued attacks on Gaza and its people. As a country that has suffered much at the hands of unbridled violence unleashed by terrorists, Sri Lanka knows only too well the human and material cost of such violence, which can indeed impede political solutions.

At the outset of the latest military attacks, the Government of Sri Lanka, on 5 January 2009, expressed its deep anguish and concern over the escalating violence in Gaza, which has led to much bloodshed. This escalation has not only resulted in further loss of civilian life and the deterioration of the humanitarian situation, it has also increased tensions in the region, with all the many consequences such a situation portends. The Government of Sri Lanka had called upon all parties to end military action and violence immediately and ensure a climate conducive to finding a way forward towards the two-State solution, a solution that is agreed to by all concerned as the only lasting solution. The Government has also reiterated its belief that such a cessation of violence by all sides would ease the untold human suffering now endured by the Palestinians and the trauma and anxiety of the people in the region.

As noted by the overwhelming majority of the Member States, especially the non-aligned countries, it is a matter of deep concern and regret that these calls for the cessation of violence have not been heeded and that humanitarian agencies, such as the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, have been the subject of attacks, resulting in the deaths of humanitarian personnel and their inability to continue delivering assistance to the Palestinian people.

Given the vital necessity of ensuring the safety and security of humanitarian personnel, all parties should facilitate their work, which is so essential to meeting the needs of the affected people, a fact that Sri Lanka is fully aware of through our own experience of providing for and supplying civilians affected by conflict due to terrorist violence.

We join others in calling upon all parties concerned to abide by the calls for the cessation of violence, especially those contained in Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), and to create conditions that will promote an effective process of negotiations. We hope that recent efforts by the friendly countries of the region and the Secretary-General's initiative to use his good offices to bring about an immediate end to the suffering and the commencement of a process towards a lasting solution will bear fruit.

We believe that the unity of the Palestinian people is of the utmost importance in achieving a

lasting solution to the question of Palestine. It is our hope that all segments of the Palestinian polity will make efforts to resolve their differences by peaceful means, unite in pursuance of the aspirations of their people and support President Abbas and his Government. Sri Lanka wishes to reiterate its support for the Palestinian people and their leadership in their efforts to achieve a comprehensive and lasting settlement.

The Annapolis conference, held with the participation of major stakeholders, gave us hope for progress in negotiations between Israel and Palestine with the aim of achieving agreement based on the two-State solution by the end of 2008. Regrettably, this achievement has not materialized and the Palestinian people continue to face more violence and more suffering. These new hardships add to those caused by the extensive restrictions and other measures of collective punishments that have frustrated the Palestinian people as well as the political process.

Sri Lanka desires to see amity and unity among Palestinians and Israelis on the basis of the two States of Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and harmony within secure borders. We consider it timely that practical measures have been taken to bring about an early resolution of the problems faced by the Palestinian people. At this critical juncture in the Palestinians' quest for their legitimate human and national rights, the Government and people of Sri Lanka would like to reaffirm our continued support for and solidarity with them.

Finally, my delegation also hopes that the Assembly can take urgent decisions in this regard without delay, based on the proposals before us.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): In recent days, Russia has frequently expressed its principled position with regard to the events in the Gaza Strip.

I should like once again to affirm our extreme concern over the deaths and suffering of civilians in Gaza. The bloodshed must stop immediately, allowing us to avert a humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza, evacuate the wounded and help the civilian population simply to survive. The entire international community demands an immediate and lasting ceasefire respected by all sides, including an end to the rocket attacks on Israel, that should lead to the full withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza. That demand is echoed in Security

Council resolution 1860 (2009), which should be implemented in full by Israel and Hamas.

It is important that we not be guided by our emotions but focus on achieving sustainable reconciliation and support the ongoing efforts of the international community, including the important work of the Quartet and the Secretary-General, who is now in the region, to that end. In that context, we highly commend the mediation role played by Egypt aimed at resolving the crisis in Gaza, and the resumed intra-Palestinian dialogue, which is an important precondition for resolving the problem of Gaza by diplomatic means.

I express the hope that the difficult consultations taking place in Cairo to settle the problems in Gaza will succeed in achieving a diplomatic and political resolution of the crisis that is mutually agreeable to all parties. We also hope that the Arab leaders will contribute to de-escalating the current dangerous phase in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

We believe that the main challenge ahead is not to point fingers but to find a way to end the violence. Wielding its traditional influence in the Middle East, Russia is pursuing its working contacts with all leading actors in order to achieve a ceasefire and the resumption of the Palestinian-Israeli peace process.

Mrs. Rubiales de Chamorro (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): We warmly thank the President of the General Assembly for responding so quickly to the request of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement to reconvene the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly. Given the inertia in the Security Council, it is time for the most representative and democratic body of our Organization to call for an end to the slaughter and genocide that have been inflicted by the State of Israel on the defenceless civilian population of the Gaza Strip since 27 December, and to condemn that genocidal aggression in the strongest terms.

As we have noted on other occasions, the Nicaraguan people are deeply saddened by and concerned over the situation of the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip. That heroic people has fallen victim yet again to genocidal Israeli attacks by land, sea and air. Israel has been an oppressor and victimizer of the Palestinian people for 60 long years. The cruel, unjust and disproportionate Israeli attacks perpetuate the unsustainable situation in that enclave of people,

victimized by an ongoing economic blockade and by grave restrictions of their basic human rights.

The humanitarian tragedy has been deepened by Israel's tireless criminal aggression by means of sophisticated prohibited weaponry since 27 December. According to information received yesterday, some 1,013 people have been killed and more than 5,000 wounded, most of them women and children. These figures are approximately double those of 8 January, when the Security Council adopted resolution 1860 (2009).

And yet, the Council has yet to take genuinely concrete and effective measures on the ground to put an end to the ongoing killing. The world has borne witness to the toll of dead and wounded, which has risen daily in the three weeks since the onset of this latest Israeli genocidal aggression, which would appear to have no end in sight.

Yesterday we saw Israeli forces attack a United Nations headquarters in Gaza, which was sheltering hundreds of individuals seeking the Organization's protection from the genocidal attacks to which they are being subjected by Israeli forces. We have also witnessed weapons prohibited by international humanitarian law being used against civilians — including white phosphorous, which has even been used against children. We have seen humanitarian organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross not being allowed to reach victims.

It has become clear both from Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) and from other previous Council resolutions on the Middle East that there is a disconnect between the resolutions adopted by the Security Council and the actions it takes to implement them on the ground.

Israel, the occupying Power, has trampled upon the United Nations Charter. It has trampled upon international law, including international humanitarian law, and upon all of its moral and ethical responsibilities. The Security Council must meet its Charter obligation to maintain international peace and security and its ensuing obligation to put an end to all actions of aggression or breaches of the peace.

My delegation wonders how these disproportionate acts of Israel barbarity can be justified. How can the deaths, to date, of more than 1,000 civilians, including hundreds of women and children, be justified through an argument of alleged

self-defence? How many more women and children will have to die in order for the massacre to end? When will the closures to the border crossings in Gaza be lifted and when will unimpeded access be permitted for humanitarian aid? The fact that the Security Council is not acting or meeting the responsibilities incumbent upon it does not free Member States of their Charter obligations; nor does it free the United Nations of its responsibility under the Charter to maintain international peace and security.

Many international organizations and bodies have issued statements condemning the Israeli aggression and calling for a ceasefire and an end to the killing of Palestinians. Among them are the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Human Rights Council, UNICEF, UNESCO and others. There have also been statements from the overwhelming majority of States that make up the international community. Also, around the world, there have been increased public demonstrations rejecting the Israeli massacre and invasion of Gaza. We cannot sit idly by as we daily witness dozens of dead and wounded innocent civilians. All international stakeholders should work to bring about an immediate ceasefire and to put an end to the military attacks and bombings that are bringing suffering to the Gaza Strip.

The General Assembly is the most democratic and representative body of the United Nations, in which all the Governments and peoples of the world are represented. It has the duty and the obligation to act on the situation in Gaza and to speak up and bring its influence to bear in demanding an immediate end to the Israeli attack and the immediate withdrawal of the occupying forces.

We call for the adoption today of draft resolution A/ES-10/L.21. My country would have preferred a stronger text calling for an immediate ceasefire and the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Israel from all occupied Palestinian and Arab territories, condemning in the strongest terms this genocidal aggression and Israel's practices of extermination in Gaza and demanding an end of hostilities, the opening of all border crossings, humanitarian access, the establishment of a monitoring mechanism, guaranteed protection for civilians and respect for international law and international humanitarian law. Such a text would also help strengthen the rule of law by supporting a criminal prosecution mechanism to ensure that those responsible for war crimes, crimes against

peace and crimes against humanity, including genocide, are brought to trial. It would seek to strengthen the peace process in general and to ensure that the Palestinian people can exercise its inalienable right to self-determination through the establishment of a Palestinian State based on the pre-June 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital.

However, we are willing to support the present draft resolution for the sake of a consensus that will bring an immediate end to the suffering of the Palestinian people. My Government supports all initiatives aimed at putting an end to the genocide as soon as possible. We are willing immediately to cooperate in the bodies of the United Nations and in the Non-Aligned Movement.

Silence in the face of these barbaric acts is complicity and that cannot be accepted by the peoples of the world. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the Middle East, Asia, Europe, Africa and even in the United States of America and Israel, the people have taken to the streets and are demanding that the genocide of the Palestinian people be brought to an end. They are demanding freedom for Palestine. Nicaragua reiterates its full and complete solidarity with the fraternal Palestinian people in its fight for freedom and for a State of their own.

We note with great satisfaction the initiative announced yesterday by the Permanent Representative of the State of Qatar. His Highness the Emir has decided to establish a reconstruction fund for Gaza and Qatar has announced that it will contribute \$250 million. Likewise, we welcome the Emir's appeal to Arab States to offer to organize a maritime transport operation to bring humanitarian assistance to the Gaza Strip as quickly as possible.

I should like to quote President Daniel Ortega Saavedra of the Republic of Nicaragua on this matter.

"With the authority of the Nicaraguan people, in the name of peace and in the name of God, we call upon the international community once and for all to take the steps necessary to ensure that Israeli troops withdraw from Palestinian territory."

Yesterday, Nicaragua took the Chair of the Central American Integration System (SICA) at its meeting in Managua, at which SICA heads of State or Government issued the following resolution with

regard to the situation in the Gaza Strip, dated 15 January 2009 at Managua.

"The Heads of State and Government of the Central American Integration System (SICA), bearing in mind the current situation in the Gaza Strip,

"Regret that a final ceasefire between the parties has not been achieved, which has led to a great loss of human life and significant material damage and has created greater political instability in the region.

"They therefore agree:

"To call for the immediate withdrawal of the Israeli army in strict compliance with the agreements reached within the framework of the United Nations Security Council, aimed at bringing about a lasting ceasefire that would make possible the restoration of peace, access to the wounded and reconstruction of the areas devastated by the conflict, and

"To call upon the United Nations Security Council to intensify its efforts to restore stability in the area, bearing in mind that it is the organ bearing primary responsibility within the United Nations system for the maintenance of international peace and security."

Mr. Hreggvidsson (Iceland): Iceland firmly supports calls by the Secretary-General for both sides to stop the fighting immediately. But the Gaza conflict cannot be addressed as a stand-alone issue. While we must acknowledge the urgency of stopping the immediate crisis, we must also frame our calls in the broader context of the imperatives for sustainable peace: first and foremost, the urgent recommencement of the peace process; intra-Palestinian reconciliation; the ending of the blockade on Gaza; and the ending of the closure regime in the West Bank.

The peace process must recommence with the active involvement of the United Nations and the international community. A new approach is needed to find a way out of the impasse. The Arab Peace Initiative is promising, but such an international process needs the full commitment of all parties involved. Iceland renews its call for the better inclusion of women in the peace process, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).

The firing of rockets from Gaza to terrorize Israeli civilians must stop. Iceland has condemned these rocket attacks. Hamas bears a heavy responsibility for drawing civilians into the conflict zone.

That said, one side's breach of international law does not exempt another from the need to abide by it. Iceland has already condemned the targeting of civilian homes, schools, hospitals and mosques in Gaza. These acts are in violation of international humanitarian law. Growing pockets of the population are trapped in their homes and aid organizations are unable to access them, according to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. The International Committee of the Red Cross states that

"wounded people have been abandoned and left to suffer alone, unable to reach hospitals and inaccessible to ambulances and medical workers. Some wounded have even died because ambulances did not receive the required clearances to reach them in time".

We call on Israel to permanently remove restrictions on medical teams and humanitarian aid.

Iceland stresses the importance of the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in the region, especially for Gaza's inhabitants, the vast majority of whom are Palestine refugees. We welcome the Security Council's call to Member States for additional contributions to the Agency in resolution 1860 (2009). We strongly condemn Israel's attack yesterday on UNRWA headquarters in Gaza, where 700 civilians had sought shelter from the shelling and vital supplies were stored. We, the United Nations Member States, must demand a full explanation for the number of attacks the United Nations has suffered in Gaza in the past three weeks. These attacks are unacceptable.

We must break out of this vicious cycle of violence. The international community must play the role of good physician and do its best to remedy the cause of the conflict. At the same time, Israel and Palestinians must refrain from actions that inflame the symptoms.

This emergency session of the General Assembly should lend its full support to the call for a ceasefire in Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) and its immediate implementation.

Mr. Al-Najem (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me to thank President D'Escoto Brockmann for all his sustained efforts and his clear insistence, since the first days of the conflict, on an immediate and complete ceasefire following Israel's aggression against the Gaza Strip. He has convened this resumption of the tenth emergency special session in the context of international demands to examine the illegal Israeli practices in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, which are in clear violation of international instruments and international humanitarian law.

We support the statements made by the representative of Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, Uganda on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and Morocco on behalf of the Arab Group.

The Israeli occupier has escalated its aggression on Gaza, which is now in its twenty-first day. A number of areas have been bombed, including hospitals, schools, an office of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and offices of the international press and media. There have also been a series of air raids in which Israeli forces have used phosphorus bombs.

This conflict began on 27 December 2008 and has so far claimed 1,100 martyrs, including 400 children and about 80 women, and over 5,000 wounded. What we are seeing in Gaza is a genocide and war crimes against a defenceless people; it invalidates all Israeli claims to legitimate self-defence. It also undermines the claim that Israel is the only democratic country in the region. Can democracy take pleasure in the spilling of blood and in the suffering of women and children?

Kuwait expresses its deep concern at the ongoing aggression, which is in clear defiance of the international community's demands and of regional and international diplomatic efforts to secure an immediate ceasefire. We repeat that the military aggression against civilians, which we reject, is a serious violation of international law, international humanitarian law and human rights law. It only fuels the cycle of violence and threatens international peace and security and the already fragile peace process. Israel must implement resolution 1860 (2009) and other relevant resolutions, and ensure unconditional

respect for international law and for the Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.

The Palestinian people, who are being killed on an ongoing basis by Israel, the occupying Power, have suffered for many years under blockade and collective punishment. Every minute sees new innocent victims. Israel has targeted UNRWA schools and bombed the main UNRWA office in Gaza. Kuwait calls upon Israel to take every possible measure to avoid a repetition of such attacks against civilians and humanitarian targets. We repeat the need for an impartial investigation into this aggression, while ensuring the security of UNRWA officials and allowing them to fulfil their responsibilities towards Palestinian civilians in Gaza.

The humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, including Gaza, is extremely difficult. We call upon all donors to give additional humanitarian assistance and to support the humanitarian organizations working there. We would like to pay tribute to UNRWA, which is working in very dangerous conditions.

The aggression not only has immediate effects, but also increases feelings of hatred and resentment. It is therefore not just a threat to international peace and security, but also the cause of an extremely dangerous humanitarian situation, because security cannot be ensured through tyrannical force, massacres and the targeting of civilians.

Lasting peace and security can result only from a credible political process that creates hope and leads to a better future. Arab countries and other peace-loving countries have been unanimous in demonstrating their solidarity with the suffering Palestinian people in the face of the unjust aggression against them, especially in Gaza. They are struggling for their inalienable right to self-determination and to create an independent State on their national soil, within secure borders and with Jerusalem as its capital.

Because of our belief in the need for an immediate cessation of hostilities and a ceasefire, we will host an Arab economic summit on 19 and 20 January. The Israeli aggression against Gaza will be the main item on its agenda. Arab Ministers for Foreign Affairs are currently meeting to study developments in the situation in Gaza.

We appeal to the conscience of the international community — if that conscience still exists — to call for an immediate halt to the Israeli war machine that is killing innocent people in Gaza, and we support draft resolution A/ES-10/L.21, submitted by the President of the General Assembly.

Mr. Ba-Omar (Oman) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, my delegation wishes to express its sincere thanks to the President for his sincere and tireless efforts, which my Government highly appreciates, to convene this emergency special session on Israeli violations in the occupied Palestinian territory, in response to requests by numerous States and regional and political groups. My delegation aligns itself with the statements made by the representatives of Morocco on behalf of the Arab Group, Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and Uganda on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

The General Assembly is meeting today to discuss an extremely important and serious matter: Israeli aggression against the occupied Palestinian territory, notably the massacres that have been committed against civilians in Gaza. Those horrific massacres by the occupying Israeli forces targeting the Palestinian people can be described as war crimes and as a form of genocide against a people under siege. If the international community represented by the Security Council is unable to stop those actions, that will be tantamount to a setback and will undermine the credibility of the international order.

While we strongly condemn the aggression and the massacres committed by Israel against the Palestinian people, we call upon the international community to take immediate action to stop the massacres, force Israel to accept a ceasefire, withdraw its forces from Gaza and allow aid and humanitarian assistance to reach the Gaza Strip, in implementation of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009).

It is time for the international community to speak with one voice and to warn Israel of the consequences of its aggression against the Palestinian people, which violates international norms and principles and is a blatant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.

The language of war and military escalation is futile: the only way to ensure Israel's security lies not in the killing of Palestinian civilians, but through

negotiations with the legitimate representatives of the Palestinian people in order to achieve a just and comprehensive peace that will provide security and stability for all parties.

Through the President of the General Assembly we call on the Security Council to shoulder its full responsibility as the organ responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security. What is happening in Palestine today requires immediate and urgent action by the Security Council to stop the aggression and impose a ceasefire. Failure by the Security Council to achieve that goal would undermine its credibility and role. Security is not an exclusive right for Israel to enjoy while the Palestinians do not.

We believe that the Security Council should act unanimously. Certain States should not be allowed to exercise the right of veto, and that right should not be abused when involving a humanitarian situation such as the one we are witnessing in Gaza and the genocide being perpetrated against the Palestinian people.

We believe that the Security Council should not adopt resolutions that cannot be implemented. We call upon the Council to establish a clear, practical and transparent mechanism to ensure implementation of its resolutions. If Israel does not implement the Security Council's resolutions, the Council should adopt punitive measures against the Israeli entity. Israelis believe that they are above the law and can do anything without accountability, and that they can disregard international norms and principles. That is a situation that must be reviewed. What continues to happen in Gaza requires immediate mobilization at all levels by the United Nations — not only by the Security Council but also by the International Criminal Court, in order to punish the perpetrators.

Finally, we wish to see immediate and responsible action by the Organization, especially by the Security Council. We endorse and support the draft resolution that is before the Assembly today in document A/ES-10/L.21.

Mr. Wolff (United States of America): The United States is deeply concerned about the situation in Gaza and southern Israel and the resulting loss of civilian life and human suffering. This is a very serious matter, as we all recognize. But this is a situation as a whole that is best dealt with through efforts on the ground, not through tendentious statements, polemics

or unrealistic proposals that do nothing to influence the situation in a positive way.

The Assembly must be careful not to complicate efforts to seek a solution or undermine ongoing diplomatic activity to halt the violence in Gaza. This is especially so when the Security Council is dealing with the matter as provided for in the United Nations Charter. This special session should not be allowed to devolve into a platform for vituperative criticism just as every effort is being made to find a mechanism to bring the conflict to a halt. The Assembly must exercise great caution that its deliberations are not seized upon by Hamas or other terrorist groups as encouragement or justification for their unlawful actions or to further inflame tensions and spread violence and instability in the region.

The United Nations has already spoken through Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), and the Secretary-General is in the region right now working to find a solution to the situation and to ensure the resolution's implementation. That is where everyone's efforts should be focused: on the real work of diplomacy being done in the region.

The situation before the current events in Gaza was clearly not sustainable. The people of Gaza watched as insecurity and lawlessness increased and as their living conditions grew more and more dire because of Hamas's actions. Hundreds of thousands of Israelis lived under daily threat of rocket attack, a circumstance no country would be willing to tolerate.

Our goal must be the stabilization and normalization of life for the people of Gaza. It is imperative that any ceasefire be durable and sustainable and that it ensure the safety and security of Israelis and Palestinians alike. Security Council resolution 1850 (2008) describes the principles to chart a better future for Israelis and Palestinians alike, noting that lasting peace can only be based on an enduring commitment to mutual recognition, freedom from violence, incitement and terror, and the two-State solution, building upon previous agreements and obligations. That is the end to which all our efforts should be directed and with which Hamas's current actions and policies are incompatible.

As a procedural matter, I noticed that yesterday the President of the General Assembly circulated his draft resolution (A/ES-10/L.21). I would note that such presidential drafts are normally presented as consensus

documents on behalf of the entire membership. I would appreciate any information you might be able to provide to us, Sir, as to what plans the presidency has in mind for scheduling consultations to achieve that consensus.

The Acting President: I assure the representative of the United States that his query will be relayed to the President of the General Assembly.

Mr. Mansour (Tunisia) (spoke in Arabic): The gravity of the ferocious Israeli aggression against the brotherly Palestinian people has reached an extremely dangerous level. Israel's brutal attacks continue to target civilians, residential areas, hospitals and schools, using the most deadly weapons, including internationally banned weapons. This has killed or injured thousands of people, many of them women and children, and has caused massive damage to infrastructure. This all has taken place in front of the international community, which has been unable to achieve an effective ceasefire or put an end to the shedding of Palestinian blood, despite the intense efforts being made.

At the beginning of the aggression, His Excellency President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali issued an urgent appeal to the international community to put an end to these dangerous developments, and to the aggression, to provide international protection for the brotherly Palestinian people and to end the blockade against them. His Excellency also strongly condemned the Israeli military escalation in the Gaza Strip. Our country has expressed its deep concern over the humanitarian, living and health conditions there, which have become a human catastrophe due to the continued shelling of houses, residential areas and civilian facilities and the continued blockades and closures, which have prevented access for international humanitarian and medical assistance. A school run by a United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) was targeted today, as were UNRWA warehouses for food and assistance in Gaza, medical relief teams and employees of international and humanitarian agencies and journalists. All of this is a grave violation of international humanitarian law and the Additional Protocol of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which deals with the protection of victims, especially women and children, during international military conflicts.

In the light of the difficult and cruel conditions in which the people of Gaza are living, His Excellency President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali has undertaken a number of immediate and urgent actions since the beginning of the aggression, which he did as an act of solidarity with the Palestinian people. Those actions are based on our conviction, as a people and as a country, that we must stand beside the Palestinian people in their current crisis, support them in these difficult conditions and help relieve their suffering.

Today, we renew our appeal to the international community and to all parties and agencies to intensify their efforts to ease the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. The gravity of the catastrophic humanitarian situation caused by the Israeli military aggression places the human conscience today before a historical responsibility. This requires firm, immediate and collective action to put an end to the aggression, to provide medical and humanitarian assistance and to guarantee that aid reaches the victims without delay.

In the light of Israel's persistent aggressive actions and its obstinate disregard for international resolutions, as well as all international and humanitarian instruments, international protection for the brotherly Palestinian people is now a greater necessity than ever before; it would guarantee an end to human losses and the targeting of innocent civilians. This demand enjoys consensus among all international parties and specialized forums, notably especially the Human Rights Council, which, in its resolution S-9/1, adopted in Geneva on 12 January, reaffirmed the need to provide immediate international protection to the people of Palestine in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Tunisia has continuously sought to achieve a just, comprehensive, lasting and peaceful solution based on international legitimacy and international initiatives. Therefore, Tunisia calls on influential parties to speedily facilitate an end to the grave deterioration of this situation, undertaking the necessary steps and efforts to achieve peace and stability in the region. Tunisia reaffirms that any crisis can be resolved only through dialogue and negotiation, and in the absence of violence and aggression that victimize innocent civilians who have long lived under occupation and blockade, deprived of the most basic rights guaranteed by all relevant international instruments.

Mr. Liu Zhenmin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation wishes to thank the President for resuming this emergency special session. This meeting is very timely and necessary, and we hope it will have a positive impact in easing the current Israeli and Palestinian tensions.

The Israeli military action against Gaza is into its twenty-first day. It has left more than 1,100 residents of Gaza dead and more than 5,000 people wounded, including many innocent civilians, women and children. The continuous escalation of the conflict has rendered tens of thousands of people homeless in Gaza and has resulted in massive destruction of infrastructure and a dire shortage of food, water, fuel and medical supplies. The situation is critical. The conflict continues as we speak. Each passing hour brings more civilian casualties and loss of property. We are deeply concerned about the non-stop escalation of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and are deeply worried about the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza.

We condemn all violence against civilians. We are shocked and appalled at Israeli attacks against a United Nations school, relief convoys and United Nations buildings. We demand that Israel ensure the safety of United Nations personnel and other relief workers. We urge Israel to stop immediately its military actions and withdraw its troops, open all crossings in Gaza and ensure unimpeded humanitarian access to Gaza.

The armed Palestinian party concerned should stop launching rockets. No action against international humanitarian law and human rights law will be tolerated.

With painstaking efforts on all sides, the Security Council adopted resolution 1860 (2009) on 8 January. It sent a very clear message. In particular, it called for an immediate, durable and fully respected ceasefire and urged Israel to fully withdraw its forces from Gaza and ensure unimpeded humanitarian access to Gaza. However, it is regrettable that more than one week has passed and resolution 1860 (2009) remains unimplemented. The imperative now is to push all parties to fully implement Council resolution 1860 (2009) and immediately reach a ceasefire in order to prevent further civilian casualties. We support the efforts undertaken by Egypt and the Secretary-General in this regard.

The international community should give priority attention to the grave humanitarian situation in Gaza and take effective measures to ease it. We support a United Nations assessment of the humanitarian situation in Gaza. We appeal to the international community to intensify its relief efforts and support the reconstruction of Gaza. The Chinese Government has already provided emergency humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian Authority in the amount of \$1 million, and we will continue to provide assistance to the best of our ability, in the light of developments in the situation.

We have always opposed the use of force in solving disputes. The excessive use of force by Israel is not acceptable. The Israeli-Palestinian question is a very complex one. There can be no military solution to the conflict, and military means can be of no help to either side. We maintain that Israel and Palestine should implement the relevant United Nations resolutions, the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Road Map, and on that basis solve their disputes through political negotiations so that the two States, Palestine and Israel, can live together in peace. China is ready to work with the rest of the international community to push the parties concerned back onto the track of political negotiations, so as to achieve a peaceful, just and lasting solution to the Palestinian-Israeli question.

China supports a General Assembly resolution on the current situation. We note that the President of the Assembly has formulated a draft resolution. We hope that all parties concerned can reach consensus on the draft resolution so as to ensure that the General Assembly can adopt it.

Mr. Heller (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Since 27 December, we have borne witness to the tragic events and violence that have unfolded in the Middle East, specifically in the Gaza Strip and southern Israel. This situation has led to many deaths, destruction and anxiety, in particular among the civilian population. Mexico condemns in the strongest terms yesterday's bombardment by Israel of a hospital, a building that housed media offices and the headquarters of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

In response to the crisis, the United Nations has been mobilized through determined action by the Security Council, the organ that bears primary responsibility for the maintenance of international

peace and security. By adopting resolution 1860 (2009) on 8 January, the Security Council fully assumed its responsibilities and laid the groundwork for a cessation of hostilities and a return to the road of peace. At the same time, various diplomatic initiatives are being undertaken with an eye to putting an end to the violence and to allow for humanitarian access in Gaza.

For that reason, we were surprised by the convening of this emergency special session of the General Assembly. But having been convened, these meetings are a new opportunity for all countries to state their official positions regarding this serious situation. The position of Mexico, as a member of the Security Council, is well known.

Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) sets forth the conditions for the attainment of a durable ceasefire, allowing for unimpeded access of humanitarian access through the creation of corridors for the entry of such assistance, and for renewed dialogue as the only possible solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Compliance by all interested parties, backed by diplomatic efforts in the region, is essential for the attainment of those goals, including putting an end to the death and destruction in the Gaza Strip as well as to Hamas's rocket fire at Israel, which has also brought damage to civilian populations.

On 13 January, the Secretary-General, with the unanimous backing of the Security Council, began an important trip to the region, in order to enter into direct contact with the primary heads of State or Government directly involved in the diplomatic efforts under way designed to promote the full implementation of Council resolution 1860 (2009) and to restore calm and peace to the region.

For all of these reasons, Mexico believes that the General Assembly should support the actions undertaken by the Security Council within the framework of resolution 1860 (2009) as well as those undertaken by the Secretary-General, and in that context should call upon both Israel and Hamas to put an immediate end to their hostilities.

Mexico hopes that, from these meetings, we can generate a resolution that is worthy of consensus among all Member States.

Ms. Espinosa (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation wishes to thank the President of the General Assembly for having responded favourably to the

request from my country and the Non-Aligned Movement for the resumption of this emergency special session of the General Assembly, given the critical situation in the Middle East and the non-compliance by Israel with Security Council resolution 1860 (2009). More than 60 years ago, my country participated in the creation of the United Nations with the purpose of maintaining international peace and security, preventing and removing threats to or breaches of peace, and bringing about lasting solutions to conflicts by peaceful means, in conformity with international law. This idea is now reflected in article 416 of the new constitution of Ecuador, which advocates seeking peaceful solutions to international disputes and conflicts and firmly rejecting the threat or use of force as a mechanism for resolving conflicts.

Unfortunately, despite being a Member of this Organization and a signatory to the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols, Israel continues to choose military action over dialogue and the peaceful resolution of conflict. It flagrantly violates the fundamental principles of international public law and international humanitarian law. The international community, represented by this Organization and its organs, cannot for even one day fail to lift its voice in protest and condemnation of Israel for its military offensive undertaken 21 days ago in the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly in the Gaza Strip, which has led to the death of more than 1,000 Palestinians, the majority of them civilians, including 280 children and to more than 4,000 wounded. The aggressor's arrogance includes attacks on hospitals and cemeteries, not to mention United Nations facilities and property such as the school where more than 40 children lost their lives, humanitarian aid convoys, and finally, yesterday, the very headquarters of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), thereby isolating itself from the entire international community and the principles that this Organization represents.

The Government and the people of Ecuador would like once again to express their solidarity with all of the innocent victims of the disproportionate Israeli aggression and to reiterate their deep concern regarding the humanitarian crisis in the area due to the abominable closure of border crossings to and from the Gaza Strip, which blocks the unhindered access of humanitarian assistance, including food and medicine, and the normal delivery of fuel and electricity.

In that context, my country associates itself with the statement issued by the Non-Aligned Movement on 13 January 2009. The statement calls for immediate compliance with Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), in particular as regards an immediate, durable and fully respected ceasefire, followed by a full withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza. It also calls for the measures necessary to respond to the urgent humanitarian and economic needs of the Palestinian people, including the permanent opening of the border crossings into Gaza and the guarantee of unimpeded access for humanitarian assistance and other basic supplies.

Ecuador also reiterates its full support for the resolution recently adopted by the Human Rights Council on the grave violations of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories, in particular those due to the recent Israeli aggression against the occupied Gaza Strip. In that resolution, parties are called upon to respect the provisions of international law and international human rights and humanitarian law. It also calls for international protection for the Palestinian people and urgent international action aimed at putting an end to the serious violations committed by Israel on Palestinian territory.

We could undertake a long debate on the legal interpretation of Articles 11 and 12 of the United Nations Charter, on the ability of the General Assembly to take decisions or make recommendations on situations that could threaten international peace and security. However, the world is hoping for much more from this Organization. My delegation therefore would like to call on all the organs of the United Nations system to comply with and enforce, within the framework of their respective jurisdictions, one of the most fundamental purposes for which they were created, that is, respect for human life.

My country therefore believes that the General Assembly should speak up today firmly and emphatically. Ecuador is thus willing to support action on a resolution leading to the effective implementation of a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, urgent attention to the humanitarian crisis suffered by the Palestinian people in this area as a result of the military offensive undertaken by Israel 20 days ago and an in-depth investigation, prosecution and punishment of all those responsible for crimes against humanity committed against the civilian population in Gaza.

Any comprehensive solution aimed at achieving lasting peace in the Middle East must be reached in the strictest respect for international law and through a permanent commitment to non-aggression and recognition that includes Israel's withdrawal from the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital.

For this reason, the General Assembly, the Security Council and all other relevant bodies of the United Nations system should bring to bear the pressure necessary to ensure compliance with each and every resolution and decision adopted over past decades on the question of Palestine, thus allowing for future and current development for the people involved.

An Assembly resolution adopted today in support of and calling for immediate implementation of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) would be a key step in bringing pressure to bear on the international community, together with other international diplomatic efforts under way to put an urgent end to the terror and the humanitarian tragedy that has prevailed in Gaza for 21 days now.

World public opinion is hoping for a resounding response from this Organization. My country is willing to provide its cooperation and support in framing any initiative aimed at that objective.

Mr. Siles Alvarado (Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*):

The Palestinian people are suffering under a criminal aggression. A new holocaust is taking place before the astonished gaze of the entire international community. Given these criminal acts, the Government of Bolivia demands full implementation and compliance with Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), which calls for an immediate ceasefire and the withdrawal of the Israeli occupying forces from the sovereign State of Palestine, which continues to be subjected to foreign occupation in open disregard of resolution 181 (II) of 1947.

My Government urges Israel to put an end to the massacre of the Palestinian people and to ensure those measures necessary to address the pressing humanitarian and economic needs of the people in the Gaza Strip through an opening of the border crossings and the implementation of the terms and provisions of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), while

ensuring unimpeded access for humanitarian assistance and supplies of food and medicine in that zone.

Bolivia laments the fact that today, far from having seen the implementation of the numerous Assembly and Security Council resolutions calling for the withdrawal of Israel from Palestine and other occupied territories, we instead see new forms of aggression. Instead of contributing to a just and lasting peace in the region, this perpetuates and increases the escalation of a permanent state of violence, undermining the efforts of the Palestinian people to be the masters of their own destiny.

Bolivia cannot sit idly by in the face of this situation. We cannot simply lament the fact that one United Nations Member State is not complying with Security Council resolutions and is continuing with the massacre and violations of human rights in Gaza. Therefore, on Wednesday, 14 January, Bolivia decided to cut off diplomatic relations with Israel in order to send the clear message that Israel cannot continue to ignore the resolutions adopted by the United Nations, an Organization of which it considers itself to be a Member. If we do nothing to ensure that these decisions are complied with, we will be accomplices to these deeds and to the breakdown of the United Nations.

What Israel is doing cannot go unpunished. The time has come to adopt more severe measures to put an end to this situation, which words cannot describe. Bolivia therefore believes that it is essential that the Security Council adopt a resolution that will send the Israeli authorities responsible for this massacre to the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity and flagrant violations of the human rights of the Palestinian civilian population. Furthermore, measures should be taken so that no military action taken against United Nations offices in Gaza goes unpunished.

A solution in Palestine hinges on the unconditional return of all occupied territories. It should not be subject to pressure imposed by the aggressor State. The Government of Israel is directly responsible for the criminal acts against its own citizens perpetrated since the beginning of this invasion in December. The Palestinian people voted for their Government in free, transparent and democratic elections, thereby exercising their sovereign right to elect their representatives. Certain countries bear

responsibility for having denied the legitimacy and validity of that process, an acknowledgement of which would today have simplified any type of dialogue and negotiation.

Bolivia welcomes the efforts undertaken by the international community, the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly, other world leaders and other bodies of the United Nations system. In this context, Bolivia aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Cuba on behalf of the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement.

We cannot limit our action to speeches analysing and condemning the situation. The Security Council must adopt the measures necessary to force Israel to comply with the provisions of Council resolution 1860 (2009). The General Assembly is compelled by time and the situation itself to adopt a decision today. The President's draft resolution unequivocally reflects the clear desire of the international community to put an end to this aggression, which is a stain on the history of the twenty-first century. The future of a people depends on our taking action, as does the meaningful implementation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and, fundamentally, the very real and effective — and not merely rhetorical — existence of the United Nations.

Mr. Barriga (Liechtenstein): We welcome this debate of the General Assembly, which is fully consistent with the mandate of this body under the Charter of the United Nations and the Assembly's practice under resolution 377 (V), "Uniting for Peace". At the same time, we regret that full clarity on the legal basis for this session was not provided at the beginning, as should have been the case.

Indeed, the dramatic situation in Gaza requires the full attention of this Assembly. The ongoing violence has led to a disproportionately high number of civilian casualties, many of them children, and has been characterized by disregard for the basic tenets of international humanitarian law. We express our deepest concern at the massive loss of civilian life, much of which seems due to a disrespect for the provisions of the Geneva Conventions and the principle of proportionality.

We are also deeply disturbed by the attacks against the United Nations school in Jabaliya and the headquarters of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

(UNRWA) and the targeting of humanitarian convoys, all in violation of international law and carried out at the expense of the civilian population.

We fully support Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), adopted by the Council more than a week ago, and join those who call for its full implementation. This legally binding decision must be implemented immediately and fully by the parties to the conflict. A durable ceasefire is both a first step and a precondition for a sustainable political solution. All military activities must therefore be stopped. There has to be an immediate end to rocket attacks by Hamas as well as to military action by Israel. It is clear that there can be no military solution to this conflict, and we therefore welcome the ongoing diplomatic efforts, including the mission of the Secretary-General, whose personal commitment we applaud.

The massive deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Gaza is disturbing. Liechtenstein has been a regular donor to UNRWA over the past years, and our Government will decide on an additional contribution early next week, in the light of the urgency of the situation. However, this is not a problem of resources. It is a problem of access, as is sadly the case in other situations as well. We wish to recall that facilitating humanitarian operations is an obligation for all parties to this conflict under international humanitarian law. Immediate, unhindered and secure passage for the delivery of humanitarian aid must therefore be granted. After weeks of relentless conflict and massive violence in one of the most densely populated areas of the world, the humanitarian needs are urgent and numerous, ranging from the delivery of medical and other basic supplies to the evacuation of injured persons. These needs must be addressed immediately and with the support of the parties. We also hope that there will be no impunity for the massive violations of humanitarian law that seem to have been committed in the course of this conflict.

This session will have served a meaningful purpose if it results in a resolution that supports the implementation of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) and increases the political pressure in that respect. This is a time when the General Assembly must stand united and send the unequivocal signal that violence in Gaza is unacceptable and must end immediately. We therefore hope that a text resulting from this session will find the strongest possible numerical and political support in the Assembly.

Mr. Amil (Pakistan): We thank the President of the General Assembly for the timely and important statement he made yesterday. Pakistan supports the convening of this emergency special session of the General Assembly in view of the grave crisis and calamitous situation in Gaza. At a moment when the Security Council has been unable to shoulder its responsibility, the General Assembly has been obliged to step forward and play its rightful role under the Charter. This meeting also reaffirms the permanent obligation of the United Nations towards the resolution of the Palestine issue.

For the past 21 days, the international community has witnessed, in utter shock and disbelief, the unfolding of an unimaginable human tragedy and humanitarian catastrophe resulting from the ongoing campaign of terror and abominable crimes of Israel, the occupying Power, against the 1.5 million Palestinian people incarcerated in Gaza. Israel has blatantly defied worldwide calls for the immediate cessation of hostilities, the lifting of Gaza's blockade and the provision of unimpeded humanitarian assistance. With complete impunity, it has flagrantly violated international human rights and international humanitarian law, particularly its obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention.

For its part, the Security Council has yet again failed to fulfil its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. It failed to act quickly and resolutely to stop the aggression and to protect the innocent civilians of Gaza. It dragged its feet as the occupying Power escalated its killing spree in Gaza. Belatedly, reluctantly and under immense international pressure, and faced with the growing civilian body count, the Council adopted resolution 1860 (2009) on 8 January.

Though not an entirely satisfactory and fair decision, that resolution instilled hope for a ceasefire. The international community, including the visiting high-level Arab ministerial delegation, sincerely expected that the violence would stop from that point forward. Unfortunately, but consistent with its track record, the Council disappointed once again. It failed miserably. In fact, it did not even try to enforce compliance with its resolution, which was reduced to a farce. The massacre of Gaza meanwhile continues right under the Council's watch. Indeed, the Council remains seized of the situation — whatever that means.

Under the circumstances, the international community is confronted with a serious question: can it afford to wait another day while innocent civilians, women and children are killed, maimed, brutalized and terrorized by the Israeli war machine? The answer is no. Silence and inaction in such a situation are tantamount to complicity with the ongoing crimes and killings in Gaza.

Pakistan stands in complete solidarity with the Palestinian people, whose pain and suffering in this hour of trial we fully share and understand. The sentiments of sympathy and support of the people of Pakistan for the people of Gaza and the question of Palestine have been expressed through all means: peace demonstrations, statements by our President, Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, the adoption of a unanimous resolution by the National Assembly of Pakistan on 12 January, and other diplomatic efforts in the context of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Non-Aligned Movement and the United Nations.

We join the rest of the international community in strongly condemning this latest Israeli aggression in Gaza, which is in fact a sequel of its decades-long policy of aggression against the Palestinian people and occupation of the Palestinian land. We support the unanimous demand to bring an immediate and complete end to this aggression and to address its causes and consequences in a just manner.

Just action can only result from a just and objective understanding of the situation and of the genesis of the problem. We wish to reiterate and highlight the following points in this context.

First, it needs to be recalled that the besieged populations of Gaza are mostly Palestinians who were originally dispossessed and driven from their own homes by the Israeli occupation.

Secondly, under decades of occupation, the Palestinian people have suffered the worst kinds of human rights violations and collective punishment, which were further aggravated by the callous blockade imposed by the occupying Power on Gaza.

Thirdly, rocket fire is only one aspect of the frustration expressed by a section of this oppressed and deprived population. We have called for an end to the firing of these rockets, which do not serve the Palestinian cause in any way. However, attempts to

justify the overwhelming force and massively disproportionate response by Israel to these rockets are entirely misplaced and unjust. This is besides the fact that it was Israel that first violated the six-month temporary ceasefire long before it expired. In fact, Israel's refusal to lift the blockade has constituted a daily and constant violation of the truce.

Fourthly, no attempts or tactics by the occupying Power can be allowed to mask the root cause and origins of the conflict, which are occupation, human rights violations, collective punishment of the Palestinian people, and the denial of their right to self-determination.

The facts and figures being reported from Gaza are earth-shaking. More than 1,000 Palestinians have been martyred; Gaza is running out of burial space. Over 5,000 have been injured; there is no way of treating them. Hospitals are not only short of supplies, but have themselves become targets. Rescue and relief workers are being attacked. Nearly 40 per cent of the casualties are children and women. The international community is aghast at the heart-wrenching and appalling images of dead and injured children. Those alive are short of food and essential supplies; thousands are homeless, without shelter and surviving in the cold and dark. Displaced they are, but within the prison. There is nowhere to escape to.

The scale of destruction, especially targeted against civilians and civilian infrastructure, is colossal. Nothing and no one has been spared. Ironically, those who have absolved themselves of responsibility for preventing this destruction are talking of reconstruction. The Fourth Geneva Convention, which prohibits collective penalties against or collective punishment of the civilian population, as well as the three cardinal principles of international humanitarian law — proportionality, distinction and precaution — have been grossly violated in the ongoing conflict.

As if things were not bad enough already, there are now reports of white phosphorous being used. The use of this element, regardless of its purpose, adds another cruel layer to this tragedy. Furthermore, what can be more galling for the international community and this body than the fact that, on the very day the Secretary-General visited Israel, Israeli shells smashed through buildings belonging to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the

Near East. We trust that the bitter irony is not lost on the international community.

The crisis in Gaza requires an urgent, collective and effective response from the international community. If the Security Council has not been allowed to act, this Assembly has to assume responsibility. In recommending action, the General Assembly may need to recognize the international condemnation of the situation in Gaza. It should distinguish between the aggressor and the aggrieved. It should be able to capitalize on the worldwide backing for an immediate and fully respected ceasefire and put its weight behind that call. It should compel Israel to immediately stop its aggression and completely lift the siege of Gaza. It can recommend the establishment of an appropriate mechanism to ensure the protection of the civilian population and the monitoring of a ceasefire in Gaza. It should demand unhindered and safe access and conditions for humanitarian work. It should also demand full respect for and the compliance of all parties with international human rights and humanitarian laws. It should make clear that there will be accountability for all violations of these obligations. It can pronounce its support for the ongoing efforts of the Secretary-General and regional and international partners to secure peace. More specifically, the General Assembly can endorse its support for the resolution adopted by the special session of the Human Rights Council, as well as for resolution 1860 (2009) adopted by the Security Council, and call for the implementation of those resolutions.

There is a need to act urgently. Failure to stop the Israeli aggression in Gaza will perpetuate the cycle of violence, foment desperation and anger and lead to the escalation of tensions in the region. Perhaps some may not have fully grasped the consequences; the biggest casualty could be the peace process. Therefore, at stake is the international community's shared objective of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East and the resolution of the Palestinian question. We believe the choice is clear. A solution lies not in the use of force, whose futility has been exposed time and again, but in dialogue and negotiations. Israel must demonstrate its sincerity and desire for peace; its actions prove otherwise.

We would like to conclude by reiterating Pakistan's steadfast and complete support for the achievement of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to exercise self-determination and sovereignty in

their independent and viable State of Palestine, on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

Ms. Gatehouse (Australia): Australia is deeply disturbed by the violence in the Gaza Strip and southern Israel. Australia strongly supports the call in Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) for an immediate, durable and fully respected ceasefire. We support the resolution's recognition of the need to address arms smuggling and to open border crossings. We also support the resolution's call for the unimpeded provision and distribution throughout the Gaza Strip of humanitarian assistance, and all efforts to improve the situation of civilians.

At this critical time, we believe that the focus for all of us present at this session needs to be on supporting those diplomatic efforts under way to give practical effect to resolution 1860 (2009). Serious and intensive negotiations are ongoing. We welcome the Egyptian-French ceasefire proposal and the important role played by Egypt in hosting talks, as well as the efforts of others, including Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

A solution must be found to end Hamas's rocket attacks against Israel, which have led to the current crisis and which we condemn. Hamas must also end arms smuggling into the Gaza Strip. This conflict has demonstrated once again the vital need for a two-State solution to the Israel-Palestinian conflict. Australia remains strongly committed to that objective.

Australia is deeply concerned that, tragically, this conflict is profoundly affecting civilians. All parties should avoid actions which could result in unnecessary or increased suffering on the part of innocent civilians. Australia condemns any action by Hamas to deliberately endanger civilian lives.

We call on Israel to do all it can to ensure the safety of United Nations and humanitarian workers. It is also critical that Israel meet its obligations under international humanitarian law to the people of the Gaza Strip and ensure that they have access to basic goods, food, medical supplies and humanitarian assistance. We recognize and welcome Israel's establishment of pauses for the delivery of humanitarian aid, and we encourage Israel to do everything within its power to improve humanitarian access and restore basic services.

On 1 January 2009, Australia announced an immediate commitment of \$5 million in additional assistance to the people of the Gaza Strip, which will provide emergency food and medical supplies, as well as cash assistance to conflict-affected families. This builds on the doubling of Australia's assistance to the Palestinian people in 2008 to \$45 million. We stand ready to consider further assistance.

Mr. Lima (Cape Verde) (*spoke in French*): I thank the President of the General Assembly for having convened this meeting of the General Assembly to address the conflict in Gaza and to allow all Member States to express their views, help shore up the fragile edifice of peace and defend the values of the United Nations, as President D'Escoto Brockmann stressed in his introductory statement.

For more than 20 days now, the people of Gaza have been living in a hell on Earth. Gaza is ablaze, and every day ordinary people are dying under the bombs. Gaza is being crushed before the eyes of the entire world, and the principles and resolutions of the United Nations — which should provide a shelter from this onslaught by fire and steel — have remained dead letter. Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), adopted over a week ago, has yet to be implemented and has in no way helped the people of Gaza, who have sought to flee but can find no protection anywhere.

The President returned to the Chair.

In such circumstances — which nauseate our conscience, have elicited worldwide incomprehension and consternation, and make us fear senseless and unrestrained reactions elsewhere in the world — Cape Verde, like other Member States, demands an immediate, durable and fully respected ceasefire and an end to all hostilities and military offensives so that the international community can effectively and swiftly address the growing humanitarian crisis that has festered too long in that territory and allow the urgent delivery of humanitarian assistance to civilians sorely in need.

Gazans find themselves trapped without food, shelter, assistance or recourse. We must put an end to the blockade of the territory and ensure that the parties recognize the urgent need to respect international humanitarian law, particularly with regard to the protection of civilians in armed conflict. We must save lives, but we must also safeguard the future.

It is absolutely vital to the Palestinian population in Gaza and to preserving any hope for peace in the subregion that we break the vicious cycle of violence, which, far from helping to address the root causes dividing the political entities and peoples of the region, has in fact deepened their differences and increased the uncertainty with regard to a desired lasting solution. Current events seem to be the result of a violent conjunction of the logics of hatred and force. For too long, tragic and cruel situations have arisen to fuel hatred, increase despair, undermine confidence and stifle all hope. Moreover, fear of the other and concerns about the future have allowed interests whose ideas and objectives are irreconcilable to promote regional armament, frenzied militarization and warmongering tendencies that are all the more reprehensible in that they would now seem to hinge on the policy considerations of electoral campaigns and political jockeying.

Events now unfold as if the resort to violence and the instigation of armed conflict are in themselves arguments for the acquisition of power. The murder of children trapped in the open-air prison of Gaza, the traumatization of populations and policies that are tantamount to collective punishment must lead us all, without resorting to pointless speeches and media soundbites, to continue working together to find long-term solutions that will bring peace and guarantee the survival of the Palestinian people.

We are in favour of all the ongoing efforts at mediation, particularly that of Egypt, and to end the fighting, especially that currently under way by the Secretary-General. We express the hope that all such efforts will succeed and allow us to talk once again of peace in the Middle East. We firmly believe and have always maintained that violence and the resort to arms can only further complicate the situation and cannot ever lead to sustainable peace in the region.

The current brutal and bloody attacks on the people of Gaza are compatible neither with our vision of the future of that region nor with the long-term interests of its peoples. Far from promoting the necessary convergence of attitudes, encouraging confidence-building measures or establishing the foundations for lasting cooperation to address the short- and long-term needs of neighbouring States, the new war is fuelling military ambitions, increasing the differences between communities, giving renewed strength to those moving upstream against history,

helping to mire that martyred region in a state of war, discouraging the international community's best intentions and undermining its efforts.

As the military option always leads to failure, we must work for peace. My country therefore continues strongly and resolutely to support the peaceful settlement of the Middle East conflict and the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and sovereignty in an independent Palestinian State living side by side and in peace with Israel within secure and internationally recognized borders on the basis of the Road Map, the Arab Peace Initiative, the Annapolis joint communiqué and the relevant resolutions of the United Nations, including Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002) and 1515 (2003).

Although the exasperation expressed in this debate has often been justified, and even in the dire current circumstances, we must not forget that we have to continue to strive for dialogue, negotiation and future peace in a land that must one day see its sons and daughters working together and intermarrying, free from the burden of the past and from those differences that currently divide and torment their parents. We diplomats in particular must not compromise the future in any way.

Mr. Galvez (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): The current situation in Gaza is absolutely unsustainable and unacceptable. It has deteriorated considerably since yesterday's events, in which United Nations facilities there were bombed. Such attacks are unjustified and totally reprehensible, particularly given the fact that they occurred while the Secretary-General was visiting the region in an attempt to attain a ceasefire.

Chile profoundly regrets Israel's disproportionate use of force in the Palestinian territories and the launching of rockets from the Gaza Strip into Israel. Chile, as ever, supports efforts to establish a lasting, stable and just peace among all parties, of course with particular emphasis on respect for the United Nations Charter, human rights, international humanitarian law and the relevant resolutions of the United Nations.

Only six days ago, the Security Council adopted resolution 1860 (2009), calling for an immediate ceasefire. Chile, for its part, calls on the parties concerned to respect the provisions of the resolution and to bring an immediate end to hostilities. The resolution is a legitimate and effective multilateral tool

for ending the hostilities, reactivating the peace process, and allowing for a secure and stable regional environment.

We also call on Israel to comply forthwith with resolution S-9/1 adopted by the Human Rights Council on the grave violations of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territory, particularly due to the recent Israeli military attacks against the occupied Gaza Strip. Chile supports the dispatch of a fact-finding mission, as called for in the resolution, to investigate all violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law in the territory. Chile also reiterates the need to uphold the norms of international law, and of international humanitarian law in particular, and calls for the dignity and rights of innocent civilians to be respected. In that context, we call on Israel to allow immediate access for humanitarian assistance to the Gaza Strip.

Historically, Chile has always favoured a balanced approach, based on international law, justice and, above all, human dignity, to the conflict in the Middle East. We reiterate our position once again that the parties should begin a negotiation process leading to a dignified, comprehensive and definitive peace based on the relevant resolutions of the United Nations. Chile also reiterates its support for the establishment of a Palestinian State and for Israel's right to live within secure borders, as set out in various United Nations resolutions.

Chile has also contributed to a peaceful solution in the region by hosting in December a regional meeting in support of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, organized by the United Nations Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. Members of Israeli and Palestinian civil society participated in the meeting. Those efforts were stymied by the onset of bombing in December, which has continued to this day.

Finally, I wish to express my delegation's appreciation for and the great value it attaches to the significant work of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and to the admirable dedication of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East in difficult circumstances on the ground. The Government of Chile has already made a monetary contribution aimed at alleviating the humanitarian situation, channelling it through the International Committee of the Red Cross.

I wish to reaffirm my country's commitment to continuing to help address the grave crisis being experienced by the population in Gaza.

Mr. Khaleel (Maldives): At the outset, permit me to congratulate you, Mr. President, on resuming the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly to consider the urgent and dangerous situation unfolding in the Gaza Strip. We believe that that is timely and appropriate, as the escalating violence and bloodshed in Gaza have the potential for disastrous consequences not only for the region, but also for the maintenance of international peace and security.

The Maldives has been following the recent developments in Gaza and the occupied territories with grave concern. We are particularly alarmed and angered by the inhuman and shameful acts being committed by Israel against defenceless Palestinian civilians, especially women and children. The Maldives strongly and forcefully condemns the disproportionate and excessive military force being unleashed by Israel against the civilian population in Gaza, claiming the lives of hundreds of innocent Palestinians, injuring thousands more and destroying property over the past 21 days of violence.

The grave humanitarian crisis created by the closure of Gaza and by the escalation of violence and hostilities is unacceptable. The Israeli attack on the United Nations school, which killed more than 40 civilians, including several innocent children, the attack on the aid convoy of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the killing of humanitarian workers last week, as well as the shelling of the UNRWA headquarters and a hospital yesterday, reflect Israel's blatant disregard for the United Nations, human lives and international humanitarian law.

The Maldives calls upon Israel to honour its international obligations as an occupying Power and to refrain from violating the human rights of the Palestinian people. The Maldives also calls upon the international community to take urgent measures to put an end to the continuing aggression and to immediately address the worsening humanitarian situation in Gaza.

In that regard, the Maldives is happy to see, for the first time in many years, the adoption of a Security Council resolution — resolution 1860 (2009) of 8 January 2009 — calling for an immediate ceasefire and putting in place a set of elements to address the

humanitarian crisis. We also welcome the resolution adopted on 12 January 2009 by the Human Rights Council at its ninth special session, calling for an independent investigation into all violations of international humanitarian law by the occupying Power against the Palestinian people throughout the occupied Palestinian territory.

The Palestinian cause has always remained close to the hearts of the Maldivian people. Our support has been unwavering and steadfast. The Maldives sincerely believes that the two-State solution — a sovereign State of Israel and a sovereign State of Palestine, coexisting side by side harmoniously within fully recognized borders — remains the only viable option to ensure long-term peace, security and stability in the region. We take this opportunity to reaffirm once again our solidarity with the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and to establish an independent and sovereign homeland on their national soil with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

There is no alternative to dialogue. A just and comprehensive resolution of the conflict can be achieved not through war and aggression, but through dialogue and negotiations based on the relevant Security Council resolutions. We therefore call upon the two parties to immediately honour and implement Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), to cease hostilities and to return to the negotiating table.

Before I conclude, let me take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation to you, Mr. President, and to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for the exemplary leadership that you both continue to demonstrate in your efforts to find a lasting solution to the conflict. In addition, I should like, on behalf of my country, to thank Egypt and other States in the region for the most constructive and important role that they are playing in order to achieve a lasting and sustainable ceasefire.

The Maldives assures the Assembly of its readiness to do whatever it can to find a just and comprehensive settlement through the achievement of two States living side by side in peace and within secure and recognized borders.

Mrs. Juul (Norway): The Security Council has called for an immediate, durable and fully respected ceasefire leading to the full withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza. The Foreign Minister of Norway joined all those in the Security Council who demanded an

immediate ceasefire. We now demand that Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) be fully implemented by all parties. Hamas's launching of rockets targeting civilians in Israel must stop. Israel's shelling of Gaza must stop. Israel must withdraw its troops from Gaza. We place our hope in the Egyptian initiative for an immediate ceasefire.

At the same time, the ongoing violence in Gaza has created new and urgent humanitarian needs. The Security Council entrusted the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee with alleviating the humanitarian and economic situation in Gaza. As Chair of the Committee, Norway stands ready to convene an international donor conference to mobilize international support for the rebuilding of Gaza. Humanitarian assistance must be channelled through existing channels, in particular the United Nations system on the ground.

International humanitarian law is crystal-clear: civilians must be protected. Norway strongly condemns Israel's shelling of the headquarters of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in Gaza. UNRWA is the lifeline and the safety net for hundreds of thousands of Palestinians. It has continued to deliver assistance to Palestinian refugees under dangerous circumstances throughout this conflict. Norway also strongly condemns Israel's shelling of the Al-Quds Hospital of the Palestinian Red Crescent. Such attacks are completely unacceptable and contrary to international law.

We reiterate our demand for an immediate ceasefire to alleviate the suffering of the civilian population in Gaza and to lay the foundations for a lasting peace.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item for this meeting.

We must not let anything dampen our sense of urgency or persuade us that perhaps we should take action tomorrow or Monday. This morning, I began this

meeting by saying that I felt it was absolutely urgent that we take action as early as possible this afternoon — hopefully before 6 o'clock. To that end, I once again entreat all members to be as brief as possible and to submit their full statements for distribution. In fact, with regard to the possibility that all 45 speakers remaining on my list will be able to speak, we are doing quite well.

I am receiving very good feedback. I believe that a consensus regarding the draft resolution is already clear. Some people — many, in fact — would like to strengthen it. Others would like to weaken it a bit. But I think, for this kind of thing, we have to go with the kind of proposal that I have made, knowing that it will not satisfy everyone. But at least we are complying with our duty to send a word of hope to the people of Gaza.

At the same time, I would like to share with the Assembly that I have received news of a memorandum of understanding having just been signed a couple of hours ago in Washington by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Minister for Foreign Affairs Tzipi Livni. If I may be allowed to say it, we must not allow this kind of ploy to lessen our sense of urgency. That document by the parties most responsible for the tragedy being lived in Gaza has its priorities. I am sorry to say, upside down. What we need is an international guarantee that Israel will immediately comply with the unconditional ceasefire mandated by Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), that the military occupation of Gaza will end once and for all and that humanitarian assistance will be made immediately available to the thousands of victims who require it.

We shall meet again this afternoon at 3 p.m. I once again appeal for promptness. In addition, I should also like to ask that we try to shorten the oral presentation of our various statements, with the understanding that the entire text of interventions will be circulated.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.



General Assembly

Emergency Special Session

Official Records

35th meetingFriday, 16 January 2009, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. D'Escoto Brockmann (Nicaragua)

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): Before proceeding further, I should like to inform members that, since the publication of document A/ES-10/438, Afghanistan has made the necessary payment to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter of the United Nations. May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of that information?

It was so decided.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): That information will be reflected in document A/ES-10/438/Add.1, to be issued at a later date.

Agenda item 5 (*continued*)

Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Draft resolution (A/ES-10/L.21)

Mr. Nsengimana (Rwanda): I have the honour to deliver the following statement on behalf of the African Group. Allow me at the outset to thank you, Mr. President, for reconvening the tenth emergency special session, on illegal Israeli actions in the occupied Palestinian territory, in particular the Gaza Strip. The African Group appreciates the high level of priority that you have devoted to this issue and to the continued suffering of the Palestinian people.

We are 21 days into the present conflict in the Gaza Strip — which has claimed close to 1,000 lives and resulted in over 4,000 injuries — and still we see little, if any, sign of abatement. The already fragile humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip has deteriorated dramatically since Israel began its military offensive, with innocent civilians, in particular women and children, bearing the brunt of the suffering. The African Group strongly condemns the loss of life on both sides and urges an immediate cessation of hostilities.

The African Group notes with regret that, eight days since the adoption of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), scant progress has been realized in its implementation. The African Group urges the General Assembly to ensure that Council resolution 1860 (2009) — which, among other important provisions, calls for an immediate, durable and fully respected ceasefire and the unimpeded provision and distribution throughout Gaza of humanitarian assistance, including food, fuel and medical treatment — is implemented without further delay or preconditions.

We urge Israel to comply fully with the Security Council's resolution, to cease its massive attacks against the civilian population in the Gaza Strip and to respect the provisions of international humanitarian law by lifting the siege and ending the wanton destruction of life and property. We call upon both parties to cease all military activities and to pursue the path of lasting peace, guided by current diplomatic efforts, including the Egyptian initiative.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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The African Group welcomes the ongoing efforts by the Secretary-General and other members of the international community that have mobilized to ensure that a lasting solution to the present conflict is arrived at. The African Group wishes to pay special tribute to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and all other organizations that are actively engaged in alleviating the plight of the citizens of Gaza under the most difficult of conditions. It is imperative that the international community remain actively seized of the situation in the Gaza Strip.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate that the African Group will continue to support all initiatives aimed at achieving a two-State solution for the two peoples. The fighting has gone on for too long. The suffering of the people has to stop.

Sir John Sawers (United Kingdom): I would like to begin by expressing the United Kingdom's support for the statement made by the Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic in the name of the European Union.

The United Kingdom welcomes the adoption of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), which my delegation drafted and sponsored last week. Resolution 1860 (2009) is very clear in its call for an immediate, durable and fully respected ceasefire. That requires an urgent halt to Hamas rocket attacks and an end to Israeli military operations. We look to the parties to implement those steps without delay.

We welcome the ongoing Egyptian efforts to deliver that ceasefire on the ground. Their work is vital and we hope it succeeds. Every day that goes by without a ceasefire sees the death of more Palestinian civilians, including children, and the continued threat to Israeli civilians from rocket attacks. We cannot afford another week of this tragic conflict, so let us have a ceasefire immediately.

Making such a ceasefire durable will be a real challenge, but one to which the parties and the international community need to rise. There has to be practical action to improve security and halt the illegal traffic of arms and their components into Gaza. In parallel, we must reopen border crossings in Gaza to allow the movement of people and goods. We welcome the progress that appears to be under way to achieve those goals.

However, the humanitarian situation in Gaza remains desperate. The United Nations continues to do an outstanding job there under very difficult circumstances. We applaud the courageous work of the staff of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, in particular given the impossible position they are put in by the military activity of Hamas and the damage being done by Israeli shelling. We condemn the fact that United Nations headquarters in Gaza was yesterday hit by Israeli shelling.

The United Kingdom has made available an additional \$10 million to help address urgent humanitarian needs. We will continue to support the United Nations and other international agencies that have the infrastructure and expertise to lead the humanitarian response. However, only a permanent ceasefire and the opening of border crossings can deliver sustained progress.

While we would not seek to limit freedom of debate in this room and in the General Assembly, we are engaged in negotiations to try to deliver a draft General Assembly resolution that will command widespread support across the membership. We nevertheless feel obliged to underline the limits that Article 12 of the United Nations Charter places on action that can be taken in the General Assembly on matters on which the Security Council is exercising its functions.

The Security Council's work on the situation in Gaza is clearly ongoing. The adoption of resolution 1860 (2009), a week ago, has been followed by further discussion in the Council. We were briefed by the Secretary-General ahead of his current visit to the region and were able to give him further guidance at that time.

The Council met again yesterday to receive a further briefing on the situation following the attack on United Nations facilities, after which the Council President spoke to the press on the Security Council's behalf. The Security Council remains seized of the matter and is ready to consider what further action is necessary in the light of the Secretary-General's findings upon his return. It cannot be doubted that the exercise by the Security Council of its functions is ongoing.

Above all, we should take care to ensure that the General Assembly acts in support of the provisions of

Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), which provides the right, agreed framework for our collective action. Once again, I call on all parties to implement that resolution urgently.

Mr. Takasu (Japan): We thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting on this very important issue, which requires urgent attention by all of us. Japan shares the serious concern about the situation in and around the Gaza Strip. We deplore the heavy casualties — now reaching more than 1,000 — which include more than 300 children and 70 women, according to reports by Mr. John Holmes.

As stated in Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), we condemn all violence and hostilities directed against civilians and all acts of terrorism. As a staunch supporter of the activities of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) on behalf of the Palestinian people, we believe that what happened at the UNRWA facility yesterday was not acceptable.

There has been extensive damage to public infrastructure, which is having an adverse impact on this dire situation. That may affect the population in the long term. We call for an effective ceasefire. For a ceasefire to be effective, it must be immediate, durable and fully respected.

In that regard, we fully support Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), which was adopted with the broadest possible political support last week. Japan fully supports the elements set out in the resolution and will work together with other members of the international community to implement them. As a member of the Security Council, Japan, united with all other Council members, will ensure that this issue remains under the closest possible review and a top priority, not just until there is a ceasefire, but until true peace is achieved in the region.

We applaud many diplomatic initiatives, in particular those undertaken by Egypt. Japanese Foreign Minister Hirofumi Nakasone expressed to Mr. Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Egypt, Japan's appreciation for the diplomatic efforts under way to bring about a ceasefire. We also lend our wholehearted support to the Secretary-General himself, who is currently in the region and, as we speak, is working tirelessly on our behalf to bring an end to the violence. We look forward to the Secretary-General's report regarding the trip upon his return.

Ambassador Tatsuo Arima, the Government of Japan's Special Envoy for the Middle East, is now meeting with political leaders of Egypt, Israel and the Palestinian Authority to urge all parties to achieve an immediate ceasefire. We very much hope that those diplomatic efforts will bear fruit as soon as possible.

Japan deeply sympathizes with the innocent civilians who are suffering in Gaza. The people there require immediate humanitarian assistance. Japan has announced emergency assistance of \$10 million, of which \$3 million will immediately be provided through UNRWA.

All necessary humanitarian and economic aid should be allowed to go through the crossings unhindered. The crossings into Gaza need to be reopened under legitimate control so that necessary supplies can reach the population in need and medical treatment can be provided to the injured.

We believe that it is of paramount importance that the solution to the problem come from the parties concerned, with support from all of us, both regionally and internationally — not the other way around. Japan, for its part, will continue to play a constructive role to help the parties in their efforts to achieve peace.

In closing, I would like to reaffirm Japan's commitment to the principles set out in Security Council resolutions 1850 (2008) and 1860 (2009). A lasting peace will be achieved only through an enduring commitment to mutual recognition; freedom from violence, incitement and terror; and the two-State solution, building upon previous agreements and obligations. We sincerely hope that the political process will soon be on track once again with a view to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace.

Mr. Zinsou (Benin) (*spoke in French*): For three weeks, the Gaza Strip has seen a bloody rampage as a result of a large-scale operation of retaliation launched by the occupying Power with the disproportionate and indiscriminate use of force. It is having a grave impact on the civilian population, which has been deliberately targeted. Benin is very aware of the suffering of the victims of this unprecedented crisis.

The right of peoples to self-determination is an inalienable right. The same applies to every State's right to exercise legitimate self-defence in strict compliance with international humanitarian law, international law and human rights. The current

situation in Gaza is totally at odds with those rules and with the basic principles of humanity. The statistics speak for themselves: approximately 1,000 dead and 5,000 wounded in such a short period of time. No cause can justify or make acceptable such human losses, the intolerable attacks perpetrated against United Nations relief facilities and the apparent use of weapons prohibited by the international community against defenceless civilians, who are trapped by extremists on all sides. Benin vigorously condemns all those violations of international humanitarian law. We call on the United Nations to carry out the investigations necessary to objectively identify those responsible.

Benin strongly urges all countries that have an influence on the situation in the Middle East to do everything legally within their power to put an end to the violence against the Palestinian people. In that regard, Benin calls for scrupulous compliance with Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), adopted on 8 January 2009. It calls for an immediate, durable and fully respected ceasefire, a withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza and the unimpeded provision and distribution throughout Gaza of humanitarian assistance.

After such a serious crisis, the international community has the imperative duty to ensure the establishment of a basis for lasting peace in the region so that this situation can never recur. In the absence of cooperation from the parties, the Security Council should use all the means at its disposal to finally put an end to this asymmetric conflict. It has lasted too long and has now taken a turn that threatens a people that the international community is obliged to protect.

Finally, Benin therefore supports the ongoing efforts to find a diplomatic solution to the crisis, in particular the Franco-Egyptian plan and the objectives of the Secretary-General's visit to the region. We urge all relevant actors to tirelessly continue the negotiations to ensure that dialogue and compromise prevail.

The elements of the final settlement of the Palestinian question are known to us all. The solution must fulfil the legitimate aspirations of all parties concerned — Israelis and Palestinians. They each have a legitimate right to live in their own State.

Benin believes that what was set out at the Annapolis conference should be implemented to bring

into effect the vision of two States living side by side in peace within borders that have been defined as a result of direct negotiations between the parties and internationally recognized and guaranteed.

Mr. Wolfe (Jamaica), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We call upon all Palestinian factions to work to overcome their differences and to restore a united front under the legitimate Palestinian Authority, because division weakens the Palestinian cause as a whole while making a negotiated settlement of the conflict less likely.

We urge all parties involved in some way to do everything to restart and maintain the peace process and bring about the reconciliation of the peoples of Israel and Palestine. The priority should be to put an end to the bloodshed and create the conditions for eliminating all sources of tension in the Middle East. We are all aware of the destabilizing influence that the situation of the Palestinian people has on international relations in the region.

The Security Council should deal with this situation in an effective and rigorous manner by using all the measures that it has at its disposal to ensure the effective implementation of its resolutions. We must put an end to the spiral of violence and give peace a chance.

My delegation supports the draft resolution to be adopted at the closing of this tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly.

Mr. Ould Hadrami (Mauritania) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me, at the outset, to extend my thanks to the President for convening this emergency special session of the General Assembly dedicated to the illegal Israeli actions in East Jerusalem and the rest of the occupied Palestinian territory, in particular the current situation in the Gaza Strip. We also extend our thanks to the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, for his tireless efforts to find a solution for the current situation.

I wish to align myself with the statements made by the representative of the Kingdom of Morocco on behalf of the Group of Arab States, by the representative of Uganda on behalf of the members of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, by the representative of Cuba on behalf of the members of the

Non-Aligned Movement, and by the representative of Rwanda on behalf of the Group of African States.

I would like to express the deep concern and pain felt by the leadership and people of Mauritania in connection with the brutal aggression that the fraternal Palestinian people are being subjected to, which has led to heavy casualties and severe damage to property. Israel is waging war on the Gaza Strip by air, sea and land, and despite the calls of all peoples of the world, human rights organizations and international relief agencies, it has continued its aggression. Unfortunately, all of those calls have fallen on deaf ears in Israel, and undoubtedly this war will encourage the spread of a culture of violence and retaliation in a world where people hope to live and coexist in peace.

This emergency special session of the General Assembly comes at a time when the Israeli aggression on Gaza has entered its third week and has led to the deaths of more than 1,000 people, in addition to the thousands of wounded, including women and children. This tragic situation is catastrophic, involving an unarmed and besieged civilian population that has to endure the brutality of a sinful military machine.

The Palestinian people are in immediate and dire need today of an international legitimacy that would protect them and provide them with a decent, dignified life in a place where they can live in peace and security, and not in an environment of heinous aggression in which even mosques, schools and United Nations facilities are targeted. Indeed, when a United Nations warehouse was violently hit by an Israeli attack, food and medical supplies were destroyed in the resulting fire.

Such places should enjoy international immunity and security in order to limit negative impacts. The international community represented in the United Nations should immediately move to put an end to the bloodshed that is taking place in the Gaza Strip. That could only happen with the full implementation of resolution 1860 (2009), which provides for an immediate and durable ceasefire leading to the full withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza and the opening of all border crossings so as to allow unimpeded provision and distribution of food, fuel and medical assistance to the people of Gaza. We therefore urge the General Assembly to work immediately towards implementing resolution 1860 (2009). After an immediate ceasefire is reached, we call for an

emergency special meeting of the donor countries for help in the reconstruction of Gaza.

The President returned to the Chair.

Out of its concern about the situation and its obligation under the Charter of the United Nations, Mauritania calls from this rostrum on the international community to work towards protecting the Palestinian people and respecting their national and humanitarian rights. This war has no winner, as has been confirmed many times. The solution cannot be a military one; it has to be based on negotiations.

We believe that the best way to achieve peace is for Israel to implement all relevant United Nations resolutions and to respond to the Arab Peace Initiative, which is based on the principle of land for peace, and to all the other good initiatives that, in total, aim to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace as well as a permanent solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict in which the creation of an independent Palestinian State, with Jerusalem as its capital and coexisting in peace and security with the State of Israel, is secured.

In conclusion, I would like to confirm that, despite our limited means and resources in Mauritania, we have supplied aid to our brothers and sisters in the Gaza Strip, in the form of eight trucks full of foodstuffs, medicine and baby formula, so that their suffering may be alleviated.

Mr. Tiendrébéogo (Burkina Faso) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, my delegation would like to thank you for agreeing to convene this emergency special session to allow all States Members of the United Nations to speak on the grave crisis that has been affecting the Middle East for three weeks now.

Burkina Faso would like to reiterate its serious concern over the continuing escalation of violence in Gaza, as it has done in the Security Council since the outbreak of these hostilities. In those cases, Burkina Faso has always expressed its firm condemnation of the use of force by both parties, including the disproportionate and indiscriminate nature of the Israeli attacks. Today, the toll is very heavy. However, while we deplore the deaths on the Israeli side, it must be recognized that it is the civilian population in Gaza that is paying the heavier price in this war.

My delegation wishes to say that, whatever the motivations behind them, the violations of human rights and humanitarian law at the levels we are now

seeing are unacceptable because they are unjustifiable. That is why we condemn them, particularly because many of the victims are women and children held hostage by a situation for which they are not responsible.

We condemn the targeting of schools, hospitals, media offices and, only yesterday, United Nations facilities, which, in this situation of general chaos, serve as temporary shelters for the civilian population. In no case can that serve the cause of any victory, much less peace.

For all those reasons, we urge the parties to fully shoulder their responsibilities, including full and unconditional compliance with the relevant international conventions, in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention, relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War.

In human and moral terms, no one can remain indifferent either to the catastrophe in Gaza, where the humanitarian situation was already alarming as a result of the blockade, or to the rocket attacks against Israel. That is why Burkina Faso, as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, voted in favour of resolution 1860 (2009). We were convinced that, despite its shortcomings, its weaknesses and the fact that it was late in coming, the resolution enabled the Security Council to join those throughout the world who have expressed their concerns, calling for an immediate ceasefire and an urgent and appropriate humanitarian response. Unfortunately and very regrettably, the parties immediately rejected the resolution and have continued to fight ceaselessly.

The situation remains urgent. Thus, no effort should be spared in ensuring that resolution 1860 (2009) is effectively implemented. In that connection, we commend and support all ongoing diplomatic initiatives to end the current violence and find a just, lasting and comprehensive political solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We are particularly grateful to Egypt for its tireless efforts, which we hope will swiftly bear fruit. The Secretary-General also deserves our unconditional support. Since the beginning of the crisis, he has consistently called for reason and responsibility on the part of Israel and Hamas and for international solidarity with the civilian population.

Achieving a ceasefire is one thing; ensuring that it is durable is quite another. In that respect, the idea of setting up an international mechanism to monitor the

ceasefire and compliance with other provisions of Council resolution 1860 (2009) should be studied very closely. In addition, we must, as soon as possible, mobilize all those of goodwill with a view to the reconstruction and economic rehabilitation of devastated Gaza.

As for the future, Burkina Faso has always supported the solution of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security. All efforts must lead towards that goal, which, we are convinced, will guarantee a just, lasting and comprehensive solution to the conflict.

Mr. Park In-kook (Republic of Korea): The Republic of Korea is deeply concerned over the continued violence, casualties and suffering of civilians in and around Gaza. My delegation deplores the ongoing hostilities and would like to express its sincere condolences to the families of the victims.

We are deeply disturbed by the loss of civilian life at the United Nations school in Jabaliya. In particular, we are profoundly disturbed that the compound of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in Gaza has been shelled, which resulted in many casualties and destroyed a considerable amount of aid. We join the Secretary-General in expressing shock and outrage.

My delegation believes that the international community should make every effort to help ensure the cessation of the ongoing violence. Once again, I call on all parties to the conflict to implement a ceasefire and, in particular, to secure unimpeded humanitarian access to the civilian population in Gaza.

The Republic of Korea fully supports the international efforts to bring an end to this tragic situation. In that regard, I welcome the adoption, on 8 January, of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), calling for an immediate, durable and fully respected ceasefire in Gaza. My delegation calls on all parties to implement the resolution, thus achieving an immediate ceasefire, allowing the passage of humanitarian assistance to the Palestinians and halting the trafficking of arms and ammunition into the territory.

My delegation fully supports the ongoing diplomatic efforts of Egypt, France and others to bring the two sides together to agree on a lasting ceasefire, to work for reconciliation and to resume regional peace

initiatives. My delegation is deeply grateful to the Secretary-General for his efforts, which are helpful in bringing an end to the conflict and dealing with the serious humanitarian situation on the ground. I encourage all parties to redouble their efforts so that the current visit of the Secretary-General to the Middle East will lead to a ceasefire and meaningful negotiations.

The people in Gaza require immediate humanitarian aid. Food, medical supplies and fuel must be delivered to Gaza. Mindful of the urgent humanitarian situation, the Republic of Korea has provided emergency humanitarian assistance for the people of Gaza.

The Republic of Korea has grave concerns regarding the negative implications that the current round of fighting will have for the long-term prospects for peace and stability in the region. My delegation believes that only a negotiated political solution can be mutually acceptable to all parties to the conflict. It must result in the establishment of an independent, democratic and viable Palestinian State living side by side with Israel in peace and security.

The Republic of Korea has been a resolute and consistent supporter of the Middle East peace process. My delegation believes that the peace process between Israel and Palestine is of critical importance to the peace and stability of the region and of the world as a whole. We join the rest of the international community in calling on all parties to take their differences to the negotiating table for a peaceful resolution of the conflict, working to ensure a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

Mr. Soler Torrijos (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, Mr. President, my delegation wishes to express its support for your decision to resume this emergency special session.

The international community must focus on a situation that continues to deteriorate every day. The situation on the ground in Gaza is grave and requires this forum to act and issue recommendations in that respect. On previous occasions, Panama has expressed its profound concern with regard to the situation of the people of Gaza. It has condemned the failure to respect the ceasefire and appealed to Israel and Hamas to lay down their arms immediately and unconditionally, take the steps necessary to avoid civilian casualties, and

allow the unimpeded delivery of medical and humanitarian assistance.

Panama has also strongly condemned the attacks by Hamas on Israeli civilians and recognized Israel's right to defend itself. Panama has also stressed, however, that that right is not unconditional. Force must be used in accordance with the principles of proportionality and necessity. The sporadic launching of rockets against civilians, however grave, does not justify the ongoing destruction of infrastructure or the killing of innumerable Palestinian civilians. The Charter of the United Nations and international law impose limits on the right to self-defence, and Israel cannot ignore borders, impose sovereignty or violate the norms of international humanitarian law. In that regard, my delegation believes that the Secretary-General's call for an independent investigation on compliance with international humanitarian law in Gaza during the current conflict is indeed timely.

Panama recognizes the efforts that have been made by various regional actors, in particular Egypt, the League of Arab States and others in Europe and Latin America, to find a solution to the crisis. Only a renewed ceasefire can open the way to establishing the minimal conditions acceptable to the people of Gaza. Only the pursuit of political negotiations between the Palestinian factions and between Israel and a Palestinian Authority that can speak on behalf of all Palestinians will lead to a lasting solution to the problem.

Despite the many efforts that have been made, the Security Council, which bears the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, is not fully meeting its obligations. The Council recently adopted resolution 1860 (2009), but it has yet to be implemented. Everyone is aware that certain members of the Council that support one party to the conflict or another do so unconditionally and fail to pay due attention to the specific activities or decisions being undertaken. As a result, it would appear that there is no will or ability within the Council to promote an understanding that will facilitate a political solution. Given that inability on the part of the Council, peace initiatives appear and disappear without any particular impact.

Panama calls on the Council and its members to assume their Charter responsibility to make a genuine

effort to understand the conflict's causes and, above all, its effects at the international level and to advocate and implement solutions that will lead to peace.

Mr. Mitchell (Grenada): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Caribbean Community.

The States members of the Caribbean Community would like to take this opportunity to first thank you, Sir, for reconvening this emergency special session of the General Assembly. We welcome this opportunity to offer our views, as part of the wider membership of the United Nations, on the dire situation in Gaza. We are happy that history will not record a silent General Assembly as human suffering escalates in Gaza as others fail to take effective action.

We draw attention to the statement issued by the ministers of foreign affairs of the Caribbean Community, which was issued on 9 January and has been circulated to Member States.

We in the Caribbean Community express grave concern over the attacks on Gaza and southern Israel, and we equally deplore the attendant loss of life, including that of non-combatants, especially innocent women and children. We deplore, too, the widespread destruction of essential property and infrastructure, most especially people's homes.

The Caribbean Community condemns unequivocally the deliberate attacks on United Nations personnel, convoys and facilities. We join with the Secretary-General in strongly denouncing these seemingly deliberate and repeated attacks.

The Caribbean Community reiterates the call made by the international community for an immediate, durable and fully respected ceasefire, as stated in Security Council resolution 1860 (2009). We are appalled by the blatant disregard of this legitimate demand by the international community. The United Nations should not condone such appalling conduct by any of its Member States, whereby the wishes of the Organization are flaunted without any consequence. That is why, Mr. President, the Caribbean Community supports your specific call for an immediate ceasefire and immediate humanitarian access. We envision, once compliance on these two actions has been attained, that the General Assembly will begin to meet its obligation under the United Nations Charter to promote peace and to end human suffering.

Throughout this conflict, we have witnessed utter disregard for the dignity and sanctity of human life, as well as the wanton killing and maiming of innocent civilians, particularly women and children. Indeed, subjecting the whole Palestinian people to collective punishment is unacceptable to us.

We support every effort being undertaken by the Secretary-General, the Arab League, States and other international organizations. There is no doubt that peace is deeply desired by the long-suffering but brave people of the Middle East region. Hence, the States members of the Caribbean Community firmly urge all parties and stakeholders to spare no effort to bring the peace process back on track. We call on the parties to adopt and adhere to meaningful benchmarks that will resolve all outstanding issues. Let there be a clear timeline for achieving lasting and durable peace between the parties, to the ultimate benefit of all concerned.

The economic and humanitarian embargo imposed on the people of Gaza must be lifted with immediate effect and measures must be instituted to allow the unhindered flow of relief supplies, humanitarian personnel and other humanitarian aid to the civilian population. The Caribbean Community calls for strict observance of the principles of international humanitarian law, including the Geneva Convention. Every effort should be made to uphold their integrity. We call on the parties to fully respect their obligation in this regard.

The economic life of the people of Gaza must not be jeopardized. The day-to-day life-supporting activities of the Palestinian people, which ensure basic human well-being and survival, must never be threatened, for to do so violates the fundamental human rights principles of right to life and to dignity.

It is in the spirit of the protection of peoples' human rights that the Caribbean Community wishes to see unfettered access given to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the International Committee of the Red Cross and other humanitarian organizations in order to enable them to carry out the legitimate humanitarian work that is so desperately needed to alleviate the plight of the population in Gaza. Equally, the right to safety and protection for the people of Gaza and the people of southern Israel must be guaranteed.

Finally, in adhering to diplomacy as the language of dispute settlement, we the States members of the Caribbean Community stand ready to play our part in finding a just and lasting solution to the international quest for durable peace between Israel and Palestine, and in the wider Middle East. We do not believe that there can be a military solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; therefore, we call on all parties to return to the negotiating table. Indeed, new momentum must be generated by all concerned. The attainment of peace in the region must start with the immediate cessation of hostilities in the ongoing conflict, with Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security within internationally recognized borders.

Once again we thank you, Mr. President, for the strong and exemplary leadership, compassion and fortitude which you have demonstrated throughout this tragic humanitarian crisis. This is exemplified by your courage, as you search, through this dialogue, for immediate but meaningful solutions.

Mr. Toihiri (Comoros) (*spoke in French*): My delegation would like to thank you Mr. President, for having reconvened this emergency special session. We are not surprised at that action as we are familiar with your commitment to just causes and to the defence of the weak against the massively powerful, of law against lawlessness and of justice against injustice. My delegation endorses the statements made by the representatives of Morocco on behalf of the Arab Group, Cuba on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, Uganda on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and Rwanda on behalf of the African Group.

Faithful to its position, Comoros supports the Palestinian cause in its just and legitimate struggle. I will be brief because everything that must be said has already been said. But everything that must be done has not yet been done regarding the situation in Gaza.

We therefore ask how much longer the international community will accept the unacceptable, pardon the unpardonable, excuse the inexcusable and find excuses for this enormous horror while witnessing the massacre of innocents: massacres of babies, children and women — yes, one third of the victims of this slaughter have been children. How much longer will the international community stand by, powerless against the daily horror of the massacre to which the civilian population is falling victim? How can one of

the strongest armies in the world bask in the glorification of its strength when it faces an unarmed civilian population? How much longer will the international community stand by powerless in the face of the bombing of what is most neutral and most sacred, including newspaper offices, hospitals, schools, United Nations buildings and places of worship? How much longer will we accept the use of a brutal disproportionate war machine and the use of phosphorous bombs against a civilian population making up the majority of the victims? How much longer will our conscience continue to be tortured as we witness the daily violation by Israel of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War? How much longer will we accept a country's continued scorn for the resolutions of the international community?

We believe that enough is enough. The depths of horror have been reached. Therefore, we the Comoros call for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), an immediate ceasefire, the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza, the lifting of the blockade on the territory, which is the main cause of the crisis, the opening of the crossing points and the establishment of an international commission of inquiry on the violations of international law in Gaza and of international humanitarian law. The international community must make major efforts to contribute to the rapid reconstruction of Gaza.

Finally, we pay tribute to those countries that are committed to bringing assistance to the martyred Palestinian people, and we commend the efforts being made by the Secretary-General, as well as by Egypt, to find a just solution to this conflict that has lasted much too long.

Ms. Parviainen (Finland): Finland fully aligns itself with the European Union statement delivered earlier by the representative of the Czech Republic.

I join my colleagues in their calls for an immediate and sustainable ceasefire that is fully respected by both parties. It is paramount that rocket fire into Israeli cities stops and Israeli troops withdraw from Gaza, leading to a normal opening of the crossings into Gaza and normalization of life for all citizens. Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) should be implemented fully and in all its aspects without any further delay.

We must ensure quick and safe delivery of humanitarian aid to the population of Gaza. We wish to reiterate that facilitating humanitarian operations is an obligation for all parties to conflict under international humanitarian law. The suffering of civilians, particularly children, is intolerable. Finland therefore condemns Israel's shelling of the headquarters of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) in Gaza. This has further aggravated the already dire humanitarian situation of the civilians in Gaza. To assist UNRWA in carrying out its vital tasks, Finland is currently preparing its contribution for the Agency.

After a ceasefire has been reached, our goal should be stepping up the peace process as called for by Council resolution 1850 (2008). In that regard, encouraging intra-Palestinian reconciliation is of the greatest importance.

Finally, there is no military solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The solution must be based on the process set out in Annapolis, leading to a viable Palestinian State existing side by side with Israel in peace and security. We support all efforts to reach a permanent ceasefire in the area.

Mr. Terzi di Sant'Agata (Italy): I would like first of all to align myself with the statement delivered earlier by the Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic on behalf of the presidency of the European Union.

My Government was one of the first to request an immediate and workable ceasefire, through repeated public statements, diplomatic activity and clear positions expressed in the Security Council during the very last days of Italy's term as a non-permanent member of the Council.

My country is deeply concerned by the extremely serious humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip. The dramatic rise in civilian victims is unacceptable. The innocent civilian population is paying too high a price for a policy of intolerance and hatred. We also stress the need to guarantee, in all circumstances, respect for the inviolability of schools, hospitals and United Nations premises. In the same way, we affirm that those safe havens for civilians must never be used for military goals.

The continued engagement of the Security Council, especially through the adoption of resolution 1860 (2009), is an important and positive aspect. All

parties should quickly heed the Council's appeal for an immediate, durable and fully respected ceasefire. There is no military solution to the crisis, and the peace process sanctioned by the Annapolis conference is irreversible, as affirmed in Security Council resolution 1850 (2008).

My Government's contribution to initiatives aimed at helping the Palestinian people of the Gaza Strip in these dire humanitarian conditions has been immediate. Italy has allocated an emergency contribution of €3 million to United Nations agencies and to the Palestinian Red Crescent. My Government has also coordinated the aid coming from civil society and the local Italian authorities, thus raising additional contributions, which will be quickly channelled to the Strip.

Egypt's commitment to facilitate a solution, particularly the plan proposed by President Mubarak, should be actively supported and encouraged. Parties should also be encouraged to engage in innovative solutions that could lead as quickly as possible to an immediate, durable and fully respected ceasefire.

International efforts to find a solution to the crisis and to restart the negotiation process should be based on the active role of the Quartet and the commitment of the European Union, and must be continued and reinforced also on the basis of the Arab Peace Initiative, which offers a solid and appropriate basis for progress. The Secretary-General's mission to the region and his efforts to put an end to the hostilities are particularly welcome. We also commend his continued personal engagement to promote a lasting solution to the Middle Eastern conflict, including through his participation in and contribution to the Quartet activities.

My country would like to confirm its willingness to make all possible efforts in the European Union framework to the reopening of the Rafah crossing and to the re-establishment of the European Border Assistance Mission, to whose creation Italy made a significant contribution in 2005.

In conclusion, the goal of this meeting should be to put the entire weight of the United Nations behind ongoing diplomatic efforts to find a solution to this situation, and in particular to support Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), consistent with its provision for a clear road map to arrive at the prompt result we are seeking.

Mr. Moraes Cabral (Portugal): I would like to add some comments in my national capacity to the statement delivered by the representative of the Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union.

It is with the deepest concern that we continue to follow the violence, human rights violations and civilian deaths, including those of women and children, and the worsening humanitarian situation in and around Gaza. We join our voice to others in the international community calling for an immediate ceasefire and for the withdrawal of the Israeli forces from Gaza, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1860 (2009).

Portugal deeply regrets the acts of violence that have caused such a high number of civilian casualties. We condemn both the rocket attacks by Hamas and the Israeli military operation. Both must cease immediately.

We invite all parties to do everything in their power to enable the alleviation of the current tragic humanitarian situation. To this end, we encourage Israel to create the necessary security conditions to allow for the effective distribution of humanitarian assistance, including medical treatment, to the affected population. We also urge the parties to fully respect their obligations under international humanitarian law.

In view of the seriousness of the humanitarian crisis, Portugal decided to make an extraordinary contribution of \$100,000 to the emergency appeal launched by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

There is no military solution to the conflict in the Middle East. Portugal, along with its European Union partners, continues to support ongoing diplomatic initiatives aimed at stopping the current crisis. Portugal underlines the risks of radicalization emerging from the continuing hostilities, with dire consequences, not only in that region, but also in other parts of the world. The continuation of the present situation will only reinforce extremism, to the detriment of moderation and dialogue.

We appeal to all parties to return to the principles and objectives of Annapolis in order to achieve a lasting peace in the Middle East, based on a two-State solution with the establishment of an independent, viable and democratic Palestinian State, living side by

side in peace and security with Israel and its other neighbours.

Mr. Tanin (Afghanistan): Mr. President, we commend your decision to reconvene the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly. Certainly, what we are facing now in Gaza is an emergency of serious magnitude. Afghanistan and the Afghan people share Gaza's pain, and we stand in solidarity with those dying, suffering and mourning in Palestine.

It has been three weeks since Israel launched its air and missile attacks in Gaza, but the violence has only continued to escalate. The fighting has been terrible in its ferocity, particularly towards innocent civilians. So far, over 1,000 Palestinians have lost their lives; around 400 of them were children. An additional 5,000 people have been injured, many seriously — again, women and children are in the majority. Israel has, in fact, systematically disregarded human rights throughout the conflict, in violation of international humanitarian and human rights law.

Despite these terrible casualties, humanitarian aid has been denied: supplies are not permitted to enter and humanitarian workers are at constant risk of attack. Safe zones and civilian areas such as schools, mosques and hospitals have been directly targeted. We join all Member States in condemning the Israeli attack on the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) compound yesterday, which demonstrated a fundamental lack of regard for the international obligations that bind Israel as a Member of the United Nations. We commend the extraordinary efforts and dedication of United Nations agencies and staff under such deplorable conditions.

The impossibility of providing assistance has pushed an already severe humanitarian crisis to the limit. United Nations agencies report that basic necessities such as food, water and cooking gas are becoming increasingly difficult to find. The terrified population of over 40,000 internally displaced persons is not permitted to leave and is unable to find refuge.

But the current casualties do not even tell the full story. The ramifications of the fighting in Gaza are far-reaching. Each additional day of violence means more desperation; the prospects for moderation, reconciliation and peace are fading.

For all those reasons, the situation in Gaza demands our immediate dedication. Common human decency demands no less.

Afghanistan stands with the Security Council in condemning all violence directed against civilians and in calling for the instantaneous implementation of Council resolution 1860 (2009) and an immediate, fully respected ceasefire leading to the full withdrawal of Israel from the Gaza Strip and a durable negotiated peace. In addition, humanitarian assistance and aid agencies must be allowed to reach those in need.

Any resolution of this crisis must respect and abide by international human rights and humanitarian law. The Fourth Geneva Convention, to which Israel is a party, requires that civilians be protected during conflict, and Israel, as an occupying force, must respect its duties towards the civilian population of Gaza.

Afghanistan stands with other Member States in agreeing that a durable solution must be one in which two States, Israel and Palestine, live side by side in peace within secure and recognized borders. That is the only way to address the security concerns of all parties and allow peaceful coexistence.

Once a ceasefire is achieved, the effort to achieve a durable solution will require the efforts of all of us, especially the regional countries directly impacted by the conflict. We appreciate and commend the tireless efforts of Egypt and the League of Arab States to successfully mediate and push forward negotiations. In addition, the Palestinian Authority under President Abbas should have a central role in any process. The solution, like the problem, will need to include regional actors and international partners.

We offer our full support to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and call for all parties to cooperate fully with him as he works to stop the tragedy unfolding before us. We join his call for a unilateral declaration of ceasefire by Israel to put an immediate end to the violence.

Today we can wait no longer; we must all act — and swiftly. Until a ceasefire is declared, there will be no end to the suffering of the people of Gaza. Once a ceasefire is declared, we must ensure that we have the political will to create a lasting and peaceful two-State solution.

Mr. Yáñez-Barnuevo (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Spain fully associates itself with the statement delivered yesterday by the representative of the Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union.

The Spanish Government has been categorical in its condemnation of the spiral of violence and destruction in Gaza that has been responsible for more than a thousand deaths, mostly among the Palestinian civilian population, as well as countless injured. The Spanish Government would like once again to reiterate before the Assembly its most fervent repudiation of both the irresponsible actions that provoked the breakdown of the truce and the reaction that ensued, which has been disproportionate and contrary to international humanitarian law. Both have only served to once again plunge the region and its peoples into hopelessness and frustration.

We must reaffirm the undeniable principle that a civilian population cannot be held hostage to political conflicts. There is no military solution to the crisis in Gaza, and, based on our deep friendship with the people of Israel, we have unequivocally said so to the Government. The Spanish Government well understands that security is vital to Israel and its citizens, as it is for any society and State. However, trying to achieve security essentially through the force of arms and without concern for the tremendous and irreparable harm to the civilian population is a dead end.

The Spanish Government has closely followed developments since this crisis erupted, on 27 December, while fully exercising Spain's capacity as an interlocutor in the region by maintaining ongoing contacts with the parties and the main regional and international protagonists. The Spanish Government's attention has focused first and foremost on the humanitarian aspect of the crisis. We have made a significant effort to deliver humanitarian assistance to Gaza, in line with the appeals by the Palestinian Government and humanitarian agencies. The first assistance arrived on 29 December. Special packages have been approved since then: €5 million earmarked for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and €1.5 million for the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent Society. We have also sent two flights carrying humanitarian assistance.

In that connection, I would like to pay tribute to international humanitarian workers, in particular those of the United Nations, especially following yesterday's new and more serious bombing of the UNRWA compound in Gaza. The Spanish Government shares the outrage of the Secretary-General and the entire Organization and supports his call for an explanation from the Israeli Government.

Following the adoption of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) on 8 January, the Spanish Government has redoubled its efforts in support of its implementation and specifically of the Egyptian peace initiative, as well as the other ongoing regional and international efforts, including those of the European Union, with a view to securing the urgent implementation of the Council's resolution, in particular the establishment of an immediate and lasting ceasefire that is fully respected by all the parties and leads to the Israeli army's full withdrawal from the Gaza Strip.

To that end, on 8 January the President of the Spanish Government received in Madrid Palestinian President Abbas, who also met with the King of Spain, Juan Carlos I. In addition, Minister for Foreign Affairs Moratinos has just completed a tour of the region, which took place from 12 to 14 January and allowed him to meet with many Egyptian, Syrian, Israeli and Palestinian officials and with the Secretary-General, who was also in the region. Moreover, the close ties that Spain has maintained with Turkey, which have grown since the joint launching of the Alliance of Civilizations initiative, are turning out to be very valuable in making an efficient contribution to international efforts to achieve an immediate ceasefire in line with the provisions of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009).

Despite the tragic events of recent days, the Spanish Government is reasonably convinced that the international efforts under way will soon be able to yield positive results. We should therefore begin to think about the opportunity to set up an international mechanism for coordination and oversight of a ceasefire, based on arrangements agreed by the parties. In any case, the Spanish Government would like to take this opportunity to announce Spain's readiness to participate in such an international mechanism, which should have the support of the United Nations. In addition, we should work hard to bring about

intra-Palestinian reconciliation under the authority of President Abbas.

Spain has on many occasions demonstrated its deep commitment to peace in the Middle East. The Spanish Government fully believes that the only solution to the current crisis is to resume a dialogue that leads to a peace agreement, which is essential to averting a new conflict in the Gaza Strip and in the region beyond. The Government of Spain will work tirelessly to that end, while taking advantage of its close ties with all the parties and the main regional and international protagonists and working with all of them in a coordinated way.

Spain fully believes in the important role of the General Assembly in finding a way out of the crisis in Gaza and supporting the efforts of the Security Council and the Secretary-General to achieve an immediate and lasting ceasefire in line with Council resolution 1860 (2009). In that regard, Spain would be prepared to support a statement by the Assembly on the crisis in Gaza, so long as it is in line with the goals to which I have referred and has wide support from general membership.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): We are coming to the end of this meeting. I should like to remind speakers to try to shorten their interventions if at all possible, on the understanding that the full text of their statements will be distributed to the membership. It is important that we take action on the draft resolution as soon as possible.

Ms. Štiglic (Slovenia): Slovenia fully aligns itself with the statement delivered yesterday by the Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union and would like to make some additional comments in its national capacity.

Slovenia welcomes the adoption of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) and calls on the parties to the conflict to immediately cease all acts of violence and respect their obligations under the resolution and the applicable international humanitarian and human rights laws. We strongly condemn attacks on schools and hospitals and on personnel and facilities of the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross, including the shelling of United Nations premises in the Gaza Strip yesterday.

We are deeply concerned regarding the humanitarian situation in Gaza, where the suffering and

anguish of the civilian population have escalated dramatically over the past days. The Slovenian Government has therefore decided to allocate additional humanitarian assistance to the population of Gaza. It is of utmost importance that humanitarian aid reaches the people of Gaza without hindrance. We welcome the decision taken by Israeli authorities to extend the cessation of attacks so that humanitarian assistance can be delivered unimpeded. Humanitarian personnel must be guaranteed free and secure movement and access. Security and administrative arrangements must be clearly established and predictable, without any preconditions.

The wounded and the seriously ill for whom medical assistance cannot be provided in Gaza must be evacuated. The most fragile population groups — women and especially children — need protection. They live with shortages of basically everything except violence. However, it goes without saying that an efficient humanitarian response is possible only if a ceasefire is in place and all crossings are open.

In conclusion, we call on both sides to cease fire immediately. The parties must restrain from any actions that would further threaten the viability of a comprehensive, just and lasting settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In this context, we strongly support Egypt in its ongoing efforts to achieve a comprehensive and durable ceasefire and the activities of the Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, in the region.

Mr. Kavanagh (Ireland): At the outset, I wish to associate myself with the remarks made yesterday by the Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ireland, Mr. Micheál Martin, T.D., warmly welcomed the adoption by the Security Council of resolution 1860 (2009) calling for an immediate, durable and fully respected ceasefire, stating:

"It is extremely important that the United Nations Security Council, as the body tasked with the maintenance of international peace and security, has now acted and asserted its wish to see an immediate, durable and fully respected ceasefire implemented in Gaza".

Regrettably, however, the tragic events of recent weeks have been further compounded by the protagonists' failure until now to respond to the will of

the international community, as so clearly expressed in resolution 1860 (2009). We urge both Israel and Hamas to respond immediately to the Council's call and to cease all hostilities in Gaza or directed against people in southern Israel. The appalling humanitarian situation now prevailing on the ground in Gaza demands no less.

We commend the other diplomatic initiatives under way, particularly those undertaken by the Governments of Egypt and France and others, aimed at ending the violence and ensuring a sustainable ceasefire. Ireland particularly welcomes the leadership that the Secretary-General has provided throughout the crisis and again at this critical juncture through his current mission to the region.

Our Minister for Foreign Affairs has also made clear Ireland's grave concern at the actions of the Israeli military, which have now twice compelled the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) to suspend its operations in Gaza. Ireland deplores the loss of life among United Nations and other relief workers in Gaza. We would remind all sides to the conflict in Gaza of their obligations to comply fully with international humanitarian law, including as regards facilitating humanitarian operations and not impeding those brave and heroic humanitarian workers seeking to assist the injured and dying. It is also important that incidents such as the shelling of United Nations facilities in Gaza and the killing of medical and ambulance personnel during the performance of their duties be fully investigated by the international community.

Speaking yesterday in the region, the Secretary-General rightly pointed out that it is intolerable that the civilian populations in Gaza and in southern Israel bear the brunt of this conflict. The civilian population of Gaza have suffered to an appalling degree. Their welfare, through the urgent and unimpeded provision of all necessary humanitarian supplies and an end to the violence, must be the priority now in ensuring that the ceasefire provided for in resolution 1860 (2009) is put in place as speedily as possible. My Government has announced an initial emergency contribution of €500,000 as an immediate contribution to the most recent United Nations humanitarian response fund to alleviate the consequences of the critical humanitarian situation on the ground.

We in Ireland know from our own national history that violence serves only to exacerbate conflict. There can be no military solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in Gaza or elsewhere. The tragic events of recent weeks remind us that only a vigorous political process can hope to achieve progress towards lasting peace and stability in the Middle East on the basis of a negotiated two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In this context, Palestinian unity remains an essential goal, not only in order to reunite Gaza with the West Bank, but also to provide a solid and realistic basis for the efforts to achieve a final status agreement.

The Security Council and the broader international community have spoken in the clearest terms of the need for both sides to desist from further violence. Together with our partners in the European Union, we stand ready to assist the other members of the Quartet and the countries of the region as they seek to ensure the implementation of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) towards that end. The terrible and continuing violence of the last three weeks makes this task a more difficult but even more critically urgent one.

Mr. Mourikis (Greece): Allow me to say at the outset that Greece fully aligns itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union.

We have been deeply concerned, from the very beginning of the current crisis, by the tremendous humanitarian disaster inflicted on innocent Palestinian civilians, by the escalation of violence and by the tragic events that are posing an imminent danger to the stability of the whole region. We would like to express our deep and profound sorrow for the victims and to stress our belief that no solution can be found and no peace can be achieved as long as violence, atrocities and attacks on civilians persist.

We strongly believe that the international community should speak out about this crisis with one voice, condemning all acts of violence that result in the loss of innocent lives. We fully support Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), and we call on all sides to work immediately and constructively for its full implementation. We recall that no military solution can prevail in Gaza, nor can any security interests ever be safeguarded by violence and terror. The immediate ceasefire is the first step in this direction.

We believe that the peace process should be intensified. In this regard, we fully support the comprehensive process launched in Annapolis, the most recent initiative of Presidents Sarkozy and Mubarak and the efforts undertaken by the Secretary-General. The international community should spare no effort to bring about a just, viable and long-overdue solution to this problem.

When faced with this tragic humanitarian situation in Gaza, we should do our utmost to assist the innocent civilian population. Greece has been among the very first countries to send humanitarian aid to the region, and we stand ready to contribute even further.

We believe that there must be an end to this vicious cycle of violence, which has tremendous costs in innocent human lives and risks destabilizing the whole region. We reiterate our strong condemnation of all acts of violence and terror and of those who support them. We also strongly condemn and deplore the targeting and bombing by the Israeli forces of civilian infrastructure, United Nations buildings and media facilities.

The diplomatic efforts should continue and should be intensified as the only means to bring about results in defusing the crisis and opening a window of hope for the future. The flow of humanitarian aid should reach the civilian population unimpeded. International humanitarian law should be respected by all, in all cases and under all circumstances. An immediate ceasefire is imperative.

We call upon all parties to comply with Security Council resolutions, show respect for human lives and pursue efforts so that peace and stability can finally come to the region.

Ms. Lucas (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): My country fully supports the statement made yesterday by the Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union.

As we already stated during the special session of the Human Rights Council on the situation in Gaza, Luxembourg is appalled by the intolerable loss of human life and the major humanitarian crisis affecting the civilian population in Gaza. The violence must stop, and it must stop now. As demanded by the Security Council in its resolution 1860 (2009), a lasting and fully respected ceasefire must be put in place immediately. The firing of rockets by Hamas

against Israel must stop without condition, and the Israeli military action must end.

The rules of international law and in particular those of international humanitarian law can no longer remain a dead letter. One party's failure to respect its obligations does not mean that the other party can do the same. All the parties to the conflict must strictly respect the principles of discrimination and proportionality and take all possible precautions to ensure maximum protection of the civilian population and civilian property, medical personnel, hospitals and health units.

The fact that installations of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), humanitarian transport and shelters bearing the United Nations emblem have been targeted and bombed is quite simply unacceptable. Unimpeded access to and provision and distribution throughout Gaza of humanitarian aid, including food, fuel and medical treatment, must be guaranteed.

Mr. Wolfe (Jamaica), Vice-President, took the Chair.

It is clear that no winner can emerge from this confrontation. There can be no military solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, whether in Gaza or anywhere else. A lasting peace can only be the fruit of a political process leading to the establishment of a viable, independent and democratic Palestinian State, living side by side with Israel in peace and security, within secure and recognized borders.

Mr. De Klerk (Netherlands): The Netherlands associates itself with the statement made earlier during our debate by the Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union and would like to make the following observations.

Deliberate Hamas rocket fire against Israeli civilians is an act of terrorism, and Israel has the right to defend itself in conformity with international law, which means, inter alia, that civilian casualties must be avoided.

The Netherlands wishes to add our voice to those who have called for an immediate and durable ceasefire. In this respect, the Netherlands would like to express its full support for Security Council resolution 1860 (2009). The Netherlands actively supports the diplomatic initiatives that can bring about an immediate, durable and fully respected ceasefire

leading to the full withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza and ending the launching of rockets towards Israel.

The humanitarian situation in Gaza is of grave concern to us. The continuation of the conflict will only further increase the plight of the civilian populations. Yesterday's horrific shelling of the United Nations compound by Israeli military forces will harm the already difficult humanitarian aid relief efforts even further. The Netherlands Government has conveyed this message to the Government of Israel.

Furthermore, the Netherlands Government and the Netherlands parliament advocate an independent investigation into all cases in which a United Nations entity or internationally recognized relief organization, such as the Palestinian Red Crescent Society, questions whether the use of force by combatants is in conformity with the international legal norms applicable to this armed conflict.

The Netherlands wishes to underline the importance of finding mechanisms and guarantees that help prevent the recurrence of the events we are witnessing in and around Gaza. The Netherlands has expressed its keen interest to contribute to such efforts, in particular in the area of effective border monitoring aimed at halting arms smuggling.

Finally, the Netherlands supports the ongoing efforts, notably those of the Secretary-General, aimed at reaching a ceasefire.

Mr. Matussek (Germany): First of all, I would like to associate myself with the statement made by the Czech presidency of the European Union yesterday.

We are witnessing a dramatic humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip. Germany deplores the high number of civilian casualties and the suffering of all civilians caused by the ongoing escalation of violence. We repeat our call for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire. Foreign Affairs Minister Steinmeier has just come back from his second visit to the region in a week. His efforts aim at supporting ongoing initiatives to reach a permanent and lasting ceasefire, a ceasefire that allows for immediate access for humanitarian aid and guarantees the security of both Israel and the Palestinian people.

There must be an unconditional halt to rocket attacks by Hamas on Israel and to the smuggling of weapons into the Gaza Strip, as well as to Israeli

military action. The cessation of fighting should allow for a lasting and normal opening of all border crossings, as provided for in the 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access. The European Union has repeatedly stated its readiness to send its European Union Border Assistance Mission back to Rafah to enable its re-opening, in cooperation with Egypt, the Palestinian Authority and Israel. Germany remains willing to contribute to this crucial mission.

We warmly welcome the initiative presented by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, and we make every effort to support it, especially through German expertise in the field of border management. We welcome the talks in Cairo and hope that they will soon lead to a ceasefire and to the first concrete steps for permanent and lasting arrangements.

The alarming humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip calls for immediate action. Food, urgently needed medical supplies and fuel must be distributed to people in need. Safe evacuation of the injured must be allowed, and immediate access for humanitarian workers should be made possible through the opening of crossing points. Germany welcomes the daily temporary humanitarian ceasefires and calls on both sides to continue to respect them in order to allow for humanitarian access. Germany has stepped up its assistance to people in need by contributing €11 million to the humanitarian relief efforts.

The Israeli shelling of the United Nations compound in the Gaza Strip is unacceptable and represents a dangerous escalation. We demand that the facts of that incident be clarified.

Finally, let me stress that Germany sees an urgent need to step up the peace process. We are convinced that there is only a political solution to the current crisis. The solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict must be based on the process set out in Annapolis and on the establishment of an independent, democratic and viable Palestinian State in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, existing side by side with Israel in peace and security. Work must be carried out, notably on the basis of the Arab Peace Initiative, to deal with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in a comprehensive and operational manner. We welcome and support the efforts of Egypt and the Arab League aimed at achieving inter-Palestinian reconciliation.

Mr. Dinesen (Denmark): Denmark fully aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of the Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union.

Denmark calls for an immediate, sustainable and durable ceasefire. It must include elements that provide the necessary security both for Israel and for the Palestinians. We commend the intense international efforts to secure a ceasefire, especially the Egyptian-led efforts and the efforts made by the Secretary-General in the region. Denmark reaffirms its full support for Security Council resolution 1860 (2009).

Denmark fully acknowledges the right of Israel to defend itself against rockets and terrorist attacks. Under the United Nations Charter, Israel has the right to self-defence. Such self-defence must be carried out within the limits laid out by — and in compliance with — humanitarian law. Special caution must be taken with regard to civilians, and civilian casualties must be avoided.

By initiating the conflict with a cynical and condemnable barrage of rockets from civilian neighbourhoods in Gaza into civilian neighbourhoods in Israel, Hamas has brought enormous suffering and pain to the Palestinian people in Gaza.

Denmark is deeply concerned about the civilian suffering in Gaza and protests the incidents in which humanitarian aid, health facilities and schools have been hit, including the latest incident in which a compound of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) was attacked. It is of the utmost importance that Israel do everything possible to improve the humanitarian situation and to ensure unhindered access for and the distribution of aid.

Our main priority now should be to secure and support an immediate ceasefire, leading to an Israeli withdrawal, and to improve the humanitarian situation. However, we should also think about the challenges ahead: reconstruction in Gaza, opening borders, preventing arms smuggling and an even greater effort to get the peace process back on track with a view to achieving the necessary two-State solution.

Mr. Hadjimichael (Cyprus): Cyprus fully aligns itself with the statement delivered yesterday by the presidency of the European Union.

Like so many other Member States here, Cyprus too is gravely concerned both about the situation itself

and about the lack of respect for and implementation of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009). We regret to empirically confirm yet again the shortcomings of our system of collective security.

We condemn the absence of a ceasefire, the excessive and disproportionate use of force by Israel, all acts of violence, the unjustifiable number of civilian casualties and the dire humanitarian situation in which Gaza continues to find itself. We strongly condemn Israel's shelling of the United Nations headquarters in Gaza yesterday and the attacks against schools of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East last week. We stress the paramount importance of respecting international law, in particular international humanitarian law, and we call for an impartial inquiry into allegations of violations of international law.

We affirm the right of all civilians to live in safety and security. We welcome the periodic opening of humanitarian corridors, but we have witnessed on the ground the inadequacy of that measure in ensuring the provision of the necessary humanitarian assistance and relief.

We urge the withdrawal of all Israeli forces from Gaza, reiterate that Gaza will be an integral part of the Palestinian State and express the hope that the peace process will be revived despite the damage that it will undoubtedly sustain through the ongoing military operation.

Lastly, we support the ongoing efforts of the Secretary-General to ensure the implementation of resolution 1860 (2009) by all parties and to bring about an immediate ceasefire, as well as other efforts to that end, such as the Egyptian and French initiatives.

Mr. Seruhire (United Republic of Tanzania): We thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this meeting and express our support for his statement and that of the Deputy Secretary-General, made yesterday. We align ourselves with the statement read out by the representative of Rwanda on behalf of the African Group.

The Government of the United Republic of Tanzania is deeply concerned about the crisis in Gaza, which threatens the peace and security of the entire region. For the past three weeks, we have been witnessing the unprecedented suffering of civilians, particularly women and children, who have been

caught up in the conflict. The humanitarian situation in Gaza is a cause for concern. It is thus important that the international community act in unity and swiftly to de-escalate the crisis and ease the suffering of the people of Gaza.

The Government of Tanzania thus calls for an immediate ceasefire and the cessation of all hostilities between the two parties, to allow a negotiated solution to be found that will end the conflict and to allow for the flow of humanitarian assistance. The United Republic of Tanzania supports the two-State solution: Palestine and Israel living side by side in peace and security. We believe that the United Nations, through the Security Council, has a central role to play in ending this conflict. We support the work of the Council and urge that an appropriate consensus on the way forward be reached immediately. We also join preceding speakers in welcoming Security Council resolution 1860 (2009).

Resolving the Palestinian question is essential to the achievement of a durable peace in the Middle East. The time for the United Nations and the international community to act on the crisis in Gaza and to find a solution to the Palestinian question is now, not tomorrow. It is as imperative as it is doable.

Ms. Graham (New Zealand): New Zealand is gravely concerned by the escalating humanitarian crisis in Gaza. We strongly support Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) and its call for an immediate, durable and fully respected ceasefire. The ever-increasing death and injury toll of Palestinian and Israeli civilians is deeply disturbing. Hamas must immediately end its rocket attacks on Israel, and Israel must immediately end its military offensive and withdraw its forces from Gaza.

New Zealand condemns the appalling attacks on United Nations personnel and facilities in Gaza. We are a long-standing supporter of the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, and we are deeply disturbed by the recent strike on its headquarters.

At a time when the humanitarian needs in Gaza are so overwhelming, the attacks against those attempting to alleviate the suffering are especially distressing. It is incumbent on both sides to allow the unimpeded provision and distribution of humanitarian assistance.

There are allegations of serious violations of international humanitarian law in this conflict. We support the Secretary-General's call for an impartial inquiry into those allegations.

Finally, New Zealand adds its voice to the call for an urgent cessation of hostilities, as demanded in Security Council resolution 1860 (2009). We urge Israel and Hamas to renounce violence and to make credible and decisive advances towards an enduring and fully respected peace. We strongly support the current efforts under way to achieve that goal.

Mr. Örnéus (Sweden): At the outset, Sweden fully aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of the Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union. We would like to make some additional comments in our national capacity. In order to save time, I will be brief.

Sweden welcomes the adoption of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) and calls for its full and immediate implementation. We strongly support the ongoing regional and international efforts to find a rapid solution to the crisis in accordance with resolution 1860 (2009), including the efforts of the Secretary-General. In that context, we would also like to stress the need to reactivate the peace process and to encourage inter-Palestinian reconciliation.

Sweden expresses its grave concern at the deepening humanitarian crisis. The civilian population is being subjected to untold suffering. We are particularly concerned about the situation of children, who constitute almost 60 per cent of the population in Gaza.

Sweden condemns the Israeli attack on the headquarters building of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in Gaza yesterday. It is unacceptable that UNRWA, the major United Nations actor in Gaza at the moment, was attacked. International humanitarian law clearly states that humanitarian and medical personnel must be protected at all times. As a result of the attack, UNRWA's ability to operate — including its ability to distribute much-needed food, medicine and fuel — has now been severely affected.

Sweden strongly emphasizes that all civilians, as well as wounded and sick persons, medical personnel and medical buildings, must be protected, in accordance with international humanitarian law.

Sweden urges all parties to the conflict to comply with international humanitarian law.

Mr. Grauls (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): Belgium is extremely concerned at the unprecedented escalation of violence in Gaza and southern Israel. It poses a serious threat to regional stability, has already caused hundreds of deaths and is accompanied by a grave humanitarian crisis linked to a situation caused mainly by the blockade of Gaza in recent months.

As I have taken the floor at the end of a long meeting, I shall confine myself to five points.

First, Belgium fully supports the statement made by the Czech presidency of the European Union.

Secondly, Belgium strongly condemns the escalation of violence that we are now witnessing.

Thirdly, the situation on the ground is obviously contrary to international humanitarian law. The reports of attacks against humanitarian workers, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and hospitals are deeply shocking. Belgium strongly condemns all violations of the rules of war and believes that this should be the subject of an independent inquiry.

Fourthly, Belgium urgently calls for an immediate and durable ceasefire, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), which should be fully implemented forthwith. Both parties must unconditionally cease all military activities and permit access to all victims and the resumption of humanitarian activities in safety, in the interest of the civilian population, for which they are responsible. The pursuit of violence is contrary to the interests of the parties and violates the basic principles of international law.

Fifthly, Belgium supports the ongoing diplomatic efforts, particularly those undertaken by the Secretary-General, to achieve a ceasefire. Given the gravity of the situation, Belgium evacuated six seriously wounded children from the Gaza Strip on 14 January, using military aircraft. These are children between 2 and 18 years old, each of whom was accompanied by a member of his or her immediate family. They have since been admitted to Belgian hospitals. Belgium remains ready and willing to evacuate and host other wounded children, depending on the requests made by humanitarian organizations and the circumstances on the ground.

Mr. Borg (Malta): Malta supports the statement delivered by the representative of the Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union.

During the past two days, this resumed emergency special session of the General Assembly has repeatedly heard the urgent appeals of all Member States for an immediate ceasefire and cessation of hostilities and for the opening of all border crossings to allow much-needed humanitarian aid to reach the beleaguered population in the Gaza Strip, as well as appeals for renewed effort in the search for a long-lasting solution to the conflict in the Middle East, which has the Palestinian question at its core. Malta joins in those appeals.

The human tragedy and the humanitarian crisis that have prevailed in and around the Gaza Strip over the past few weeks can no longer be condoned. The cries of the civilian population in the region require an immediate response from all of us in order to alleviate the constant suffering and anguish being experienced by those innocent victims.

As many of the interventions in the Assembly have highlighted, violence, rocket attacks and military operations will not lead us anywhere except to considerable loss of life, devastation and destruction, in addition to the lifelong trauma of men, women and, especially, children living in Palestine and Israel. For that beleaguered population, the deprivation that a conflict brings to their daily lives, the fear of being killed or wounded, whether within the shelter of their homes or in United Nations schools or compounds, and their vulnerability to the destructive machinery of war severely test their ability to survive a cruel conflict that has resulted in many deaths and thousands of wounded. Malta continues to consistently condemn the rocket attacks from Gaza on Israeli towns and citizens. At the same time, any reaction clearly cannot exceed the limits of what is acceptable in achieving one's aim.

Malta, true to its commitment to join other Member States in taking effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to peace, wholeheartedly supports the efforts currently being undertaken by the Secretary-General and the President of Egypt to seek an immediate halt to the hostilities in the Gaza Strip. Malta wishes to take this opportunity to salute the heroic and unstinting role of the United Nations staff in Gaza, in particular those of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine

Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), and the personnel of other international organizations who are risking their lives in their efforts to help improve the plight of the population in Gaza.

The provisions of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) must be fully respected and implemented. In this respect, Malta feels that the situation on the ground requires that commitments made by all concerned be appropriately adhered to through an international monitoring mechanism. Malta also believes that the Middle East peace process, based on the Arab Peace Initiative and the agreements reached at the November 2007 Annapolis conference for a two-State solution, must once again be resumed and pursued vigorously.

Malta also continues to strongly believe that a resolution of the Middle East conflict can be achieved only through peaceful dialogue in which the ultimate and principal goal is the creation of a Palestinian State living side by side with Israel in peace and security.

Ms. Ziade (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to express our thanks to the President for reconvening this tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly. I would also like to express our full support for the statements delivered on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, the Group of Arab States and the Organization of the Islamic Conference.

In the words of my President, General Michel Sleiman, our meeting today has been preceded by the shedding of innocent blood, the screams of torn bodies and the thick smoke over the dear land of Gaza. This situation places upon us a major responsibility that must match the enormity of the Israeli aggression.

We meet today in the context of efforts undertaken to put an end to this aggression and to provide support for the brotherly people of Palestine. It is a great responsibility that the General Assembly assumes when it becomes a rostrum of justice and of what is right, the guardian of the provisions of international law and the sponsor of a resolution that garners the widest support. We have worked and continue to work to obtain the widest possible support for the draft resolution (A/ES-10/L.21). We want the resolution to have the necessary effectiveness, which does not mean that we are prepared to barter away the fundamental rights and principles enshrined in

international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

We have welcomed the content of the draft resolution tabled by the President of the General Assembly calling for an immediate ceasefire and the full withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza, facilitating entry for and distribution of humanitarian assistance to the Gaza Strip and the mobilization of efforts by the international community to ease the humanitarian and economic crisis pervading in Gaza.

In its solidarity with the brotherly Palestinian people, Lebanon has not and will not spare any efforts to help it to confront the injustice that has befallen it and to regain all of its legitimate rights. The Lebanese Government has taken the decision to provide assistance in the amount of \$1 million. Furthermore, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Expatriate Affairs in Lebanon, Mr. Fawzi Salloukh, contributed to the efforts made by the Arab ministerial delegation to the Security Council when resolution 1860 (2009) was adopted, calling for an immediate and durable ceasefire, the full withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip and the alleviation of the humanitarian catastrophe in the Strip.

As always, Israel responded with intransigence, by defying international legitimacy and the resolutions of the United Nations. Its Prime Minister stated that Israel is not concerned, and it continued its aggression against the Gaza Strip and its people.

How similar is this Palestinian suffering to the suffering of the Lebanese as a result of repeated Israeli attacks, the latest in July 2006! That was an aggression that the Lebanese faced, unified in their commitment to the resolutions of international legitimacy, first and foremost of which is Security Council resolution 1701 (2006). As soon as that resolution was adopted, Lebanon declared its full commitment to all its provisions, while Israel continues to refuse to abide by many of them.

The bloody events in Gaza have shown that the root of the problem lies in the continuing Israeli occupation, in its practices that contravene international law, in Israel's intransigence and in its rejection of the peace process based on the Arab Peace Initiative adopted by Arab leaders at the Beirut summit in 2002 and which has been reaffirmed at every successive summit, in addition to the principles of the

Madrid conference and all relevant international resolutions, the latest being resolution 1860 (2009).

Has the time not come to mobilize international efforts to stop the cycle of violence, to deter Israel in its criminal practices and its violation of international law? Has the time not come to compel Israel to heed the Arab and international calls for peace?

Some hours ago, Lebanon welcomed His Excellency the Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon, in his visit to the region bearing a message of peace. Lebanon has welcomed him as a representative of international legitimacy. He is making welcome efforts to find solutions to various crises in the world, especially the Middle East, which has been the scene of one of the oldest and most lethal conflicts against humanity and the principles of international law.

Lebanon has reaffirmed its commitment to international legitimacy and all resolutions of the United Nations as a means to resolve conflicts, and we have reaffirmed the importance of all of the initiatives being made to bring about an immediate ceasefire and an end to this grave humanitarian catastrophe. In Lebanon, we look to the United Nations to fulfil the obligations entrusted to it under its Charter.

The Acting President: I give the floor to the Permanent Observer of the Holy See.

Archbishop Migliore (Holy See): At the very outset, my delegation would like to express its solidarity with the civilians in Gaza and some Israeli cities who bear the brunt of a cruel conflict.

My delegation takes this opportunity to wish the Secretary-General well in his mission to step up the pace of the joint diplomatic efforts and ensure that urgent humanitarian assistance reaches those in need.

The Holy See asks that Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) of 8 January, which calls for an immediate and durable ceasefire and for unimpeded humanitarian assistance, be implemented fully. In the past few days, we have witnessed the practical failure on the part of all sides to respect the distinction between civilian and military targets. In the context of this resolution, we call on all parties to fully abide by the requirements of international humanitarian law in order to ensure the protection of civilians.

The troubled history of some sixty years of coexistence of the Israeli and Palestinian peoples has

witnessed a long succession of conflict, but also of dialogue, including the Madrid meetings, the Oslo Accords, the Wye River Memorandum, the peace process of the Quartet, the Road Map and the Annapolis Conference, with their two-State solution. Unfortunately, however, the many efforts to establish peace between the Israeli and Palestinian peoples have so far failed.

My delegation observes that so many failed efforts are due to insufficiently courageous and coherent political will for establishing peace, from every side, and ultimately an unwillingness to come together and forge a just and lasting peace.

The United Nations has the weighty task of getting the parties to respect the ceasefire, pave the way to negotiations and agreements between them and ensure humanitarian assistance. In particular, the General Assembly can assist the parties in conflict to discover new patterns for establishing peace, patterns based on mutual acceptance and cooperation amid diversity.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker for this meeting. We will suspend the meeting briefly so that the President may return and resume the Chair.

The meeting was suspended at 5.35 p.m. and resumed at 5.55 p.m. with the President in the Chair.

The President: Dear brothers and sisters, I know that we were all striving to take action on the draft resolution no later than 6 o'clock. I thank all members for endeavouring to make sure that we had finished with the speeches in time.

Our European brother from the Czech Republic has requested more time because the European Union is supposedly still negotiating about something. So, if that is amenable to members, I ask that at 6.30 p.m. sharp, which is in a half an hour, we will come back. In the mean time, the meeting is adjourned. Please be back, and do not leave. Be back at 6.30 p.m. sharp.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.



General Assembly

Emergency Special Session

36th meeting

Friday, 16 January 2009, 6.40 p.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. D'Escoto Brockmann (Nicaragua)

The meeting was called to order at 6.55 p.m.

Agenda item 5 (continued)

Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Draft resolution (A/ES-10/L.21)

The President: In the light of information received from the Secretariat that Israel has asked for a vote and that there is no consensus on the text contained in document A/ES-10/L.21, and in accordance with rule 36 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, I have no alternative but to withdraw my sponsorship of draft resolution A/ES-10/L.21.

I now give the floor to the representative of Ecuador.

Ms. Espinosa (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): In response to your recent announcement, Mr. President, of your withdrawal of your sponsorship of draft resolution A/ES-10/L.21, I would like to inform you that my country, Ecuador, now wishes to assume sponsorship of the draft resolution. In addition, several other countries have joined Ecuador in co-sponsoring the draft resolution. Those countries are Venezuela, Indonesia, Malaysia, Syria, Algeria, Nicaragua and Senegal.

In that regard, we request that the General Assembly now proceed to take action without further delay on the draft resolution contained in document A/ES-10/L.21, taking into account solely the following

revision to operative paragraph 1. I will read out the revision in English because the text initially circulated by the President of the General Assembly was in English.

(*spoke in English*)

"Demands full respect for Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), calls for an immediate ceasefire and the immediate, unconditional withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza, and calls for the unimpeded provision and distribution throughout Gaza of humanitarian assistance, including food, fuel and medical treatment."

The President: I call on the representative of Egypt on a point of order.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt): Despite the fact that you announced, Mr. President, at the end of the last meeting here in the General Assembly that you would allow time for consultations that are going on between the European Union, Palestine and other countries, I see that you have chosen to give Ecuador the floor before me, even though I raised my flag earlier. I fully respect your judgement and your opinion, but I still believe that we already have an agreement among a large number of the members of the General Assembly on another text that has some amendments based on your guidance and based on the fact that you gave us half an hour, which has now been extended to one hour. I think it should be treated with respect.

Mr. President, you gave us the mandate and you gave us the time to negotiate, and now you are

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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allowing for a move to take off on another track. I do not think that that is fair. As much as I always concur with your judgement, Sir, and as much as I always respect your opinion, I do not think that that is the right course to follow in this Assembly.

Mr. President, you gave us time to negotiate and we negotiated, and we reached agreement on a text. There were amendments — of course, we have to take everyone on board — but we have to come to a new consensus on this draft resolution. I am sure that we are not going to have consensus, because one party has asked for a vote anyway.

But this is an extraordinary practice that I am seeing today for the first time. I have served in this place for about 15 years over my entire career, and this is one of the rare times that I see the President authorizing Member States to go negotiate and come back with an agreement, and when we have the agreement, he provides an opportunity for other delegations to put on the floor another draft resolution that we know is not going to get more than 70 votes.

The President: I would ask the representative of Egypt to please hold his horses.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt): Okay.

The President: The representative of Egypt accuses me of being disrespectful. Let me remind him that respect is a two-way street. I did not see him. I am never the one who sees anything going up. I get it in writing, and it is right here. I was reading from the notes, which call for Ecuador, so, please, I demand respect from the Permanent Representative of Egypt. He is accusing me without knowing what he is talking about.

Secondly, he said he needed time to negotiate. I do not know what he was negotiating. I said here, very frankly, to my brothers and sisters in the Assembly that the European Union has requested more time to talk about, I do not know, God only knows, what, and I gave it to them. So I did not know what I was to expect or what they were even doing there. I am talking about the European Union. I did not know that he was part of the European Union. So, please —

I am being told that the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic would like to take the floor.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (spoke in Arabic): Mr. President, do not be upset. Do not be

upset for the deadlock that has been reached after two days of intensive, in-depth, sincere discussions that you, Sir, as President of the General Assembly, have shepherded very capably, wisely and patiently with the purpose of arriving at a consensus. It is difficult, it is even impossible to do so, but you tried anyway. You tried, and we thank you for your efforts. You have attempted to arrive at an agreement over a text that, in principle, should represent to all a service that the international community is offering the wounded Palestinian people who have been butchered in Gaza.

Do not be upset, Father, who are honest and candid, because the battle of good against its enemies has always been the reason for our presence in this world. That battle is one that the forces of darkness and ignorance can never win regardless of their procrastination, lies and falsifications.

Do not be upset, Mr. President. You have dedicated yourself to being a role model for us all, and while we understand the reluctance of some, you have forced those who disagree with you — who are few among us — to respect you and hold you in high regard, even though some have tried to complicate your leadership of this session. We understand that differences of opinion do not upset good relations.

Mr. President, the truth of the matter is that you have reinstituted lost credibility to the conscience of this international organization. With your proud halo of humanness you have alleviated the pain of Gaza's innocents, its children, its women and its elderly, who are being burned alive by an Israeli war machine that leaves no human or stone unharmed.

I support the request of the Permanent Representative of Ecuador — indeed, I join her in her request — and I would like to adopt exactly what she has said, word for word. All of us must work in service of the Charter, and not simply find ways to circumvent or manoeuvre around it. As I have said before, people are dying. That is why some of us are asking for more time.

But we can wait no more. The Israeli beast is preying upon innocents in Gaza. The matter is one of moral principles and not one of negotiating over this term or that.

Mr. Palouš (Czech Republic): Speaking frankly, I would say that this conversation we have been having makes me very sad. I speak on behalf of the European

Union, and I would like to strongly support what the representative of Egypt has said. We have really worked hard, all day, to reach consensus on an important text. We worked hard with the Permanent Observer of Palestine. We worked hard to come up with a balanced text that really can reach consensus in this Assembly. So we hope that this text, which is now on your desk, Mr. President, will be considered in a proper procedural manner, and we are certainly ready to explain what is in it. I would like to announce that this text has the support of the whole of the European Union.

Mr. Khazaei (Islamic Republic of Iran): I do not want to go into detail. My delegation would like to support what has been said by the Permanent Representative of Ecuador, and I would like to inscribe the Islamic Republic of Iran as a sponsor of the draft resolution. I fully support the revision by the representative of Ecuador. In addition, what the Permanent Representative of Syria said reflected the facts.

I do not wish to go into detail or to explain this issue further; its urgency is clear to all of us here. As you said, Mr. President, every passing minute matters to the lives of the many innocent civilians, including women and children, in the Gaza Strip. Therefore, once again, my delegation fully supports the draft resolution co-sponsored by the representative of Ecuador. I would also like to request, Mr. President, that the Assembly take action on the draft resolution.

Mr. Valero Briceño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We wish to thank you most openly and sincerely, Mr. President, for your efforts to ensure that, at this emergency special session, the General Assembly can adopt a draft resolution that has the broadest possible support. You have acted transparently and have assumed responsibility for enabling the Assembly to exercise the authority entrusted to it by the Charter of the United Nations. Your role at this historic turning point will be recognized by posterity. You can be assured that your name will be recorded in the annals of modern history, because we are at a crucial moment when this body must express itself with equanimity and, above all, serve the interests of international peace and solidarity.

As all delegations are aware, this morning the delegation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, when it officially presented the position of its

Government, proposed a number of additions to the text that you introduced yesterday, Mr. President. Therefore, all delegations without exception had the opportunity to consult with their capitals and regional groups and to carefully study the text. That is why it should be put to the vote.

In that connection, I should like to recall that the delegation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela proposed six amendments to the draft resolution. I wish to go over them, even though they are set out in the official document circulated by the presidency this morning, which sets out precisely in both Spanish and English the proposals of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. We officially submitted a number of amendments that, in our opinion, would enhance the draft resolution. For example, we demanded that the occupying Power, Israel, withdraw from the Gaza Strip and comply immediately and unconditionally with the provisions of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009). We also requested that the draft resolution include a demand for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Israeli military forces from the Gaza Strip, as well as a demand that the occupying Power, Israel, lift the economic and military blockade imposed on the occupied territory of Gaza and immediately reopen border crossings into Gaza to permit humanitarian access and the free movement of persons.

The President: The representative of Algeria has requested the floor to speak on a point of order.

Mr. Benmehidi (Algeria): I apologize to the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for having taken the floor.

I wanted to respectfully request, Mr. President, that you call on those delegations that are consulting within the Hall while the General Assembly is debating to show respect for the Assembly and to retake their seats.

The President: I kindly request the representatives of the different delegations not to obstruct the work of the General Assembly and, if they must engage in consultations, to have the minimal courtesy to do so outside.

I now ask the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to please continue.

Mr. Valero Briceño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much,

Mr. President, for urging us to respect the rules that govern the functioning of this body.

The Venezuelan proposal also called on UNICEF and all other agencies concerned with humanitarian aid to establish a programme providing assistance to Palestinian children and adolescents affected by war trauma. Finally, we also requested that the resolution express support for the Human Rights Council resolution adopted on 12 January 2009, on the grave violations of human rights after the occupation of Palestine, including the recent occupation of the region of Gaza. However, I wish to officially report that the delegation of Venezuela has decided not to insist on those amendments, although we believe that some of them could enhance the text.

Therefore, we support the decision of the delegation of Ecuador to take over the President's text. We believe that that text represents a major effort and that the President acted appropriately and with dignity and decorum in giving delegations the opportunity, after consulting with their capitals and in regional groups, to speak about this draft resolution. Therefore, we welcome and enthusiastically support the draft resolution now co-sponsored by Ecuador and the revision that its representative read out in this forum.

The only difference, as members are already aware, is that Ecuador proposes a demand for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the Israeli forces illegally occupying Palestinian territory. The whole world is demanding this. The United Nations cannot carry out its humanitarian assistance as long as there is a land, sea and air occupation of the Palestinian people in Gaza.

To sum up, we believe that it is essential that this forum pronounce itself in favour of the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the Israeli army from the Gaza Strip. I would here like to appeal to the conscience of all delegations of the world, especially those of the Arab world and members of the Arab League, and I call on them — and I am speaking from the very heart of the people of Venezuela — to support this revision.

This is going to be noted in the records of this Organization for posterity. Who could agree that the Israeli occupying forces continue to commit their crimes against the Palestinian people? Who would support Israel's ongoing illegal occupation? This is a challenge to all countries. We would therefore like to

lend our strongest support to the draft resolution now presented by the delegation of Ecuador, with the revision introduced.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the observer of Palestine.

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): Mr. President, I want to begin by reiterating for the 100th time the appreciation of the Palestinian people for your courageous and principled position in resuming this emergency special session and in trying very hard to reach a near-consensus on a draft resolution that will send the loudest possible message to Israel to the effect that almost the entire international community is united in demanding that it stop its aggression against our people immediately on the basis of resolution 1860 (2009).

I acted as your faithful son in following your instructions, Sir, and negotiating in good faith with a very important bloc in the United Nations — the Europeans — for the purpose not of giving Israel the gift of splitting the General Assembly, but of cornering it by having the entire General Assembly united in demanding compliance with resolution 1860 (2009), beginning with an immediate ceasefire.

In this connection, I want to thank everyone here, because all of them are supporting our heroic people in Gaza, who are fighting and spilling their blood because of the aggression of Israel against our people. We appreciate everyone's efforts. I do not see a split within the General Assembly, with the exception of Israel, which is the country that is refusing to comply with resolution 1860 (2009). In this connection, I thank my sister, the Ambassador of Ecuador, the European Union and you, Sir, especially, because you led this effort for a successful conclusion. That conclusion has to be successful.

I appeal to everyone in this room. What is needed is not two sides competing between themselves to show how faithful they are to the Palestinian people. We know that the Assembly is truly outraged about what is happening to our people, and we appreciate that position. We appeal to all members to support this text that the Assembly entrusted me with negotiating with the European group. I believe the text that we have reached with them, which does not fundamentally change the original text and is faithful to resolution 1860 (2009), which demands an immediate ceasefire, is a text that we can live with.

Of course, if it were up to us, we would want a very strong draft resolution that would demand many things. But for my part, I want to serve the interests of my people in Gaza well and try to stop this carnage and these atrocities committed by the Israelis against my people immediately, and that will require the unity of the entire General Assembly against Israel and for all of the small issues — and they are important issues — to be put aside.

On behalf of the Palestinian people, on behalf of our brothers and sisters in Gaza, I appeal to the Assembly to unite behind this text, which would then acquire almost total consensus, and to adopt it tonight in order to isolate Israel and not give it the gift of splitting the General Assembly over issues of who is more devoted to the Palestinian people and who is not. We are all concerned about the Palestinian people, and I appeal to the Assembly to accept this text, to put it to a vote and to adopt it by almost 190 votes. That would be the most forceful and most powerful message the Assembly could send to the Palestinian people. I hope we do it, and I hope we do it right now.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank our brother from Palestine for his clear, brave and important statement.

(*spoke in English*)

I think we all heard that our brother from Palestine has requested an immediate vote and has asked for the widest possible support for the proposition that has been presented. We will therefore now proceed to an immediate vote.

I call on Egypt on a point of order.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt): After that emotional call by the representative of Palestine in favour of the text that was negotiated between Palestine and the European Union and not in favour of the text that was presented by Ecuador and other delegations, I think that we have to apply our minds and our hearts in support of the Palestinian cause and in support of the text that was negotiated all day long with the European Union. I think that the text that Ambassador Mansour is asking for has been given to the Secretariat, and it is a full text covering all the aspects of the draft resolution based on the proposal that you, Sir, have withdrawn.

That is why I was the first to raise my flag. The fact that Ecuador was written in your notes, Sir, is not

my concern. That has to do with your staff, who did not wait for the flags to be raised and wrote in your notes that Ecuador should be given the floor before me. Those are not the rules that apply in this Assembly.

With all due respect and humbleness, I ask you to support what was said by the representative of Palestine. We should put the text that was negotiated, which you allowed time for us to negotiate, to the vote. A full text has been given to the Secretariat, I would request the Secretariat to circulate that text to the members so that everybody knows that it is almost identical to the text that you presented, Sir, with some slight adjustments that have been made to obtain the 180 or 190 votes that the Ambassador of Palestine is looking for. Otherwise we may divide the General Assembly into many, many categories and then have Israel evade its responsibility and ignore all the measures that we are trying to achieve in this Assembly.

I therefore join the representative of Palestine in putting the draft resolution that was negotiated between Palestine and the European Union, with the participation of many other countries, to the vote first.

The President: It is my understanding that, in the event that the General Assembly is presented with two different proposals, it should obviously vote on the proposal that was presented first. I am saying that that is my understanding. That is what it is in the rules of procedure. Representatives may read it.

I call on the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Shaaban (Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management): Rule 91 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly reads as follows:

"If two or more proposals relate to the same question, the General Assembly shall, unless it decides otherwise, vote on the proposals in the order in which they have been submitted. The General Assembly may, after each vote on a proposal, decide whether to vote on the next proposal."

It is the Secretariat's view that the meaning of "unless it decides otherwise" here gives rise to two options: either to vote in accordance with the proposals made or, if that is challenged, to vote on which proposal is to be voted on first.

Ms. Espinosa (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I really must acknowledge that there is some confusion because we are being asked to decide on a new draft resolution that we are not familiar with and we do not really understand whether it is Egypt or the European Union that is presenting it. We do not have a text. With all due respect, I think that there is some confusion here.

The only draft resolution on which there is clarity on what we are discussing and that includes a revision that has been circulated is, to my understanding, that of Ecuador. Now, I would like to ask for a few minutes, because clearly Ecuador cannot take a decision on a draft resolution that it had presented with the agreement of other countries, which have not expressed their opinions on the issue.

Thus, Mr. President, I would request that you give us at least a few minutes. Ecuador makes this request so that we can consult the other countries that are sponsoring this draft resolution together with Ecuador.

With regard to the draft resolution of which the representative of Egypt is speaking, that request is appropriate, since we are not going to take a decision on a draft resolution that we are not familiar with or do not clearly understand where it comes from. In other words, who is presenting this draft resolution? Where is it? Not all members have had the opportunity to see that text, and I think we need the time to do so. Later, we can focus on the minutiae of procedure, such as who raised their flags first and so on. But I would like to remind you, Sir, that as soon as you said the word in English "withdraw", Ecuador immediately raised its flag. In addition, Ecuador will not respond to any kind of intimidation. I would like to ask with all due respect, Mr. President, that we be given the time, first of all, to see the draft resolution that we are supposed to decide on, with which we are not familiar, that we have not seen and are not even clear about who negotiated it.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The observations just made by the representative of Ecuador seem perfectly reasonable to me. I had no idea that members did not even have the text of the draft resolution that it is proposed we vote on. In any case, it appears to me proper that we should take some 10 minutes.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt): I think we are a little overheated here. We are all working in the same direction in support of the Palestinian people. As we have already expressed before, what we need here in the General Assembly, given that the Security Council adopted resolution 1860 (2009) by 14 votes in favour with one abstention — with the latter party having announced in its explanation of vote that it was supportive of the provisions of the resolution — is something closer to unanimity.

I am not in dispute with my beautiful lady here, the Ambassador of Ecuador. We are running on the same course, but we are running on two different tracks. There is a confusion about which draft we are voting on.

So we ask that the Secretariat circulate first the draft resolution that has been given. The Ambassador of Ecuador has asked who is sponsoring this draft. This draft was negotiated between Palestine and the European Union, and as Palestine is not yet a full Member State, Egypt is presenting this draft on behalf of Palestine.

I would second Ms. Espinosa's request that we have a 10- or 15-minute break and then we will come back. I would also request that you, Mr. President, take that draft first and, pursuant to the text quoted by the Under-Secretary-General, "unless it decides otherwise", I formally move for a vote on that draft unless we reach a different agreement during this recess, and that we take this draft as a basis, since it is a draft that is going to get 180 votes in favour of the Palestinian people. We believe and we are greatly convinced that this draft is the best draft to adopt.

We thus accept Ms. Espinosa's proposal for a 15-minute recess or until this draft is distributed and until people understand that it contains exactly what is set down in the Ecuadorean draft. It contains almost the same language, but within a different context, and will be found acceptable to everybody in the Assembly.

Mr. Ripert (France) (*spoke in French*): I would simply like to say that I think we heard a very moving statement from the representative of Palestine. France does not need to present evidence of the efforts it has made with all its partners in the European Union to obtain a lasting ceasefire as soon as possible that will bring peace not only immediately in Palestine and Gaza, but to the entire region in the future. We should listen to the Palestinian Ambassador. The Ambassador

of Egypt, who has presented the text on behalf of Palestine, has perfectly summarized our thinking.

Mr. President, if you wish to suspend the meeting, you have the text and you can propose that the General Assembly vote on the European Union-Palestine-negotiated text. I would like you to do so very clearly on behalf of France. We could give dozens of speeches, but I think it is not worth it. It would be more appropriate to respond forthwith to the request made by the Ambassador of Palestine and then, following a brief suspension that would allow all delegations to obtain the text, which was given to the Secretariat almost an hour ago, to vote straight away on the text.

Mr. Palouš (Czech Republic): I just wanted to express support once again for the statement made by the Ambassador of Egypt. Actually, this text is nothing new and not a mystery; it is your text, Mr. President, that we have been working with. So I believe that the basis of this text is very similar to the one co-sponsored by the Ambassador of Ecuador. But this text can really attract a consensus, and we have acted on your instructions to bring the European Union fully behind it with all its power. Therefore, I hope that after the break, this text will be taken into consideration.

The President: If this text is so similar to the other one, why was it necessary?

Ms. Espinosa (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): This is simply a matter of procedure. People who have much experience and who have been here for many years know that a draft resolution cannot be voted upon when the one it is replacing has not been withdrawn. In other words, the draft resolution that was formally introduced and with which everyone is familiar, including the revision to its operative paragraph 1, is the one that Ecuador is proposing. We are not just going to say, "No, here we will vote on the draft resolution submitted by the European Union, which has been negotiated with Palestine and other countries". I simply want it established that the draft resolution that was introduced in the first place — I am following rule 84 of the rules of procedure, on voting — is the first draft resolution, which was introduced with the revision that was read out by my delegation. Another draft resolution cannot just appear and then be put to the vote. Here, we must follow the rules of procedure, and those rules must be adhered to by all countries, large and small.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): That is exactly what I said half an hour ago.

(*spoke in English*)

Let us not waste any more time, please. I shall now suspend the meeting for 15 minutes.

The meeting was suspended at 7.45 p.m. and resumed at 8.15 p.m.

The President: I am sorry, my dear brothers and sisters, but now the other group has requested a couple of minutes more, and I therefore suspend the meeting once again.

The meeting was suspended at 8.15 p.m. and resumed at 8.25 p.m.

The President: Is there any result to report to the Assembly?

Ms. Espinosa (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank you, Mr. President, for having given us these minutes — much less time than was given to the European Union — to discuss the amendments.

We have conducted consultations with countries that co-sponsored draft resolution A/ES-10/L.21, as orally revised by Ecuador, in order to hear the variety of voices, because we are persuaded that we must come here in the greatest spirit of cooperation and goodwill and, above all, thinking of the well-being of the Palestinian people.

Basically, Ecuador wishes to propose that we return to the original text. In order to reach an agreement, Ecuador is willing to withdraw its oral revision only if this proposal is accepted by Egypt and the European Union. In other words, we are proposing to vote on the original draft text as submitted. We are also proposing to withdraw the revision that Ecuador submitted with the support of several other countries, in order to reach the greatest consensus possible and, of course, heeding the requests of the representative of Palestine.

That is the position of Ecuador, and of course we would immediately call for a vote on the original text.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt): If I understand my neighbour correctly, the group of sponsors of the revision that Ecuador proposed before we suspended still insist on voting on the original text, but without the oral revision.

In that regard, heeding the appeal of the representative of Palestine, following the discussions and informal consultations in which almost all those in this room have participated and bearing in mind the Palestinian cause and the need to ensure the largest possible number of votes in favour of the draft resolution that I presented, I make a motion, under rule 91 of the rules of procedure, that the draft resolution contained in document A/ES-10/L.21/Rev.1 be put to the vote before the draft resolution sponsored by Ecuador and other countries.

We believe that our draft resolution will garner 180 votes in favour. It is nearly identical to the draft resolution that the representative of Ecuador is pushing to the vote. Therefore, we believe that if we wish to advance the cause of the Palestinian people and to support an end to the attacks on the Palestinians, the provision of humanitarian assistance, a lifting of the blockade and full access to the Palestinian people, our draft resolution should be put to the vote first. I make a motion under rule 91 that we proceed to a procedural vote in that regard.

The President: The General Assembly now has before it two proposals: the proposal contained in document A/ES-10/L.21 and the motion by the representative of Egypt, who has requested that priority be given to his proposal.

I now give the floor to the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management.

Mr. Shaaban (Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management): For the record, rule 91 reads as follows:

"If two or more proposals relate to the same question, the General Assembly shall, unless it decides otherwise, vote on the proposals in the order in which they have been submitted. The General Assembly may, after each vote on a proposal, decide whether to vote on the next proposal."

In accordance with rule 91, the General Assembly should first consider the draft resolution contained in document A/ES-10/L.21. However, in the light of the request by the representative of Egypt, the Assembly will first take a decision on his request for priority.

The President: I will first put to the vote the motion made by the representative of Egypt that

priority be given to his proposal, contained in document A/ES-10/L.21/Rev.1.

We shall now begin the voting process. A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Belarus, Belgium, Benin, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Dominica, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Hungary, Iceland, Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Panama, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Spain, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Bolivia, Brunei Darussalam, Cuba, Ecuador, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Malaysia, Nicaragua, Syrian Arab Republic, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

Abstaining:

Barbados, Belize, Bhutan, Botswana, Côte d'Ivoire, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, India, Jamaica, Lesotho, Myanmar, Nepal, Niger, Pakistan, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, South Africa, Trinidad and Tobago, Yemen

The motion was adopted by 112 votes to 10, with 20 abstentions.

[Subsequently, the delegations of Malta and Tunisia advised the Secretariat that they had intended to vote in favour, and the delegation of Djibouti advised the Secretariat that it had intended to abstain.]

The President: I will now put to the vote the proposal by the representative of Egypt, contained in document A/ES-10/L.21/Rev.1. A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Gambia, Germany, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of

Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel, Nauru, United States of America, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

Abstaining:

Australia, Canada, Côte d'Ivoire, Ecuador, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Nigeria, Syrian Arab Republic

Draft resolution A/ES-10/L.21/Rev.1 was adopted by 142 votes to 4, with 8 abstentions (resolution ES-10/18).

[Subsequently, the delegation of Djibouti advised the Secretariat that it had intended to vote in favour; the delegation of Micronesia advised that it had intended to vote against; and the delegation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela advised that it had intended to abstain.]

The President: I call on the representative of Cape Verde on a point of order.

Mr. Lima (Cape Verde): I have a problem here. I voted, but my vote was not registered. When the Secretariat came to me, they told me that I had not paid my arrears and that that is why the name of my country does not appear on the board. I would like to ask the Secretariat why my name does not appear. I do not understand, because I did not receive the necessary letter from the Secretariat. Bangladesh, Afghanistan and the Comoros, which are on the same list as I am on, appear on the board. I do not understand. The Secretariat must explain to me why Cape Verde cannot vote while others that have not paid, like me, are voting. Something is wrong in the Secretariat, because I am sure we have paid.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Shaaban (Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management): On 16 January in the afternoon, the President read from his notes as follows,

"Before proceeding further, I should like to inform members that, since the issuance of document A/ES-10/438, Afghanistan has made the necessary payment to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter."

It was decided that the Assembly took note of that.

In a letter dated 13 January 2009 from the Secretary-General to the President of the General Assembly, contained in document A/ES-10/438, there is a list of countries. Wherever there is an asterisk, it is explained at the end of the document that in resolution 63/4, the General Assembly decided that the Central African Republic, the Comoros, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Sao Tome and Principe, Somalia and Tajikistan should be permitted to vote in the Assembly until the end of its sixty-third session.

The President: I call on the representative of the Gambia on a point of order.

Mr. Faati (Gambia): My delegation requested the floor in order to raise a point of order. It relates to the fact that we voted on the draft resolution contained in document A/ES-10/L.21/Rev.1, which was based on the original draft resolution submitted by Ecuador. I think we set a precedent today which is not a good one in that a revised draft resolution has superseded an original. That is not the way things are done. In order to bring forth a revised draft resolution, a delegation must be a sponsor of the original. That did not happen in the case here. I just want to register that it is not a good precedent and I think that should be noted in future.

The President: I call on the observer of Palestine.

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): I want to thank members for succeeding in what they wanted to accomplish — an almost unanimous vote to pressure Israel to comply with resolution 1860 (2009), beginning with an immediate ceasefire that will stop the killing of our people and that will, of course, be followed immediately by total withdrawal from the occupied Gaza Strip.

We want to thank everyone, even our brothers and sisters who abstained. They abstained not because they objected to the contents of the draft resolution. They are part of the consensus in applying the pressure on Israel in order to isolate it so that it will comply with resolution 1860 (2009).

This evening I want to thank — on behalf of the Palestinian people and our brave people in Gaza — each and every representative who worked to accomplish this very powerful political message. And if Israel does not comply, we are going to do other

things. We will go and knock on the door of the Security Council with a resolution based on Chapter VII, and we expect the Assembly to be with us, help us and support us until we bring an end to the aggression, achieve a total withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza and the siege against our people in Gaza is lifted and all border crossings are opened, in accordance with the Agreement on Movement and Access, especially the border crossings with Israel, because Israel is the one that is imposing a blockade against our people. We shall prevail with the support of the Assembly.

Tonight the Assembly has sent a very encouraging message to the brave people of Gaza in their fight to stop the aggression immediately. I wish to thank the Assembly and to congratulate members for accomplishing what they wished to accomplish.

The President: I shall now call on those representatives who wish to make statements in explanation of vote on the resolution just adopted.

Mr. Valero Briceño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): This is to specify without further explanation that Venezuela was convinced that most members of the Assembly would vote in favour of the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip. In that case, and having noted that there was a majority in favour of the draft resolution submitted by Egypt, which changes the draft resolution submitted by the President in some parts, I would like it placed on record that the delegation of Venezuela abstained from voting given the circumstances.

Mr. Moreno Fernández (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation would have preferred the formula originally proposed by the delegation of Ecuador. In Cuba's opinion, that formula was closest to the position adopted by the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement with regard to the dreadful situation in Gaza. In fact, we would have preferred the original text submitted by you, Sir. For that reason, we voted against giving priority to the draft resolution presented by the representative of Egypt. Nevertheless, despite those preferences and to demonstrate our continuing solidarity with the Palestinian people and with the cause of Palestine and our firm condemnation of the continuing aggression by Israel in the Gaza Strip, we voted in favour of resolution ES-10/18.

Finally, I wish to congratulate you, Sir, and to thank you for your unstinting efforts and your dedication, which have been evident in all of the

actions taken by the General Assembly over the past few days.

Mr. Khazaei (Islamic Republic of Iran): I would like to express my delegation's congratulations to you, Sir, on your hard work and your great leadership. We admire your noble sense of responsibility and sympathy for the innocent people of Gaza. What you have done so far is indeed a true reflection of the vote of conscience and public opinion. It was our sincere hope that, under your exemplary leadership, this meeting could adopt a stronger resolution condemning the criminal acts of the Israeli regime and forcing an immediate end to that aggression and massacre in order to compensate for the inadequate action of the Security Council on the matter.

Regrettably, since the adopted resolution was not what it expected, my delegation abstained in the voting. I would like to reiterate the principled position of my Government and my people that the root cause of the current situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, especially in the Gaza Strip, is the occupation of that territory by the illegitimate Israeli regime. In our view, as long as that problem is not addressed and the Palestinian people are not able to fully exercise their right to self-determination, any hope for durable peace and stability in the region will be no more than a futile wish.

Ms. Eilon Shahar (Israel): Many speakers during this open and endless tenth emergency special session have excelled at rhetoric, but less at reality. In reality, it is known that Israel engaged in this conflict against its will. You, members of the General Assembly, know well that Israel had no choice, as you would not either if the lives of your people were at stake. You well know that you would not place a mere resolution over the heads of your men, women and children to protect them from unrelenting terrorist attacks.

Furthermore, as we stated at the opening of this session, Article 12, paragraph 1, of the United Nations Charter prohibits the General Assembly from making recommendations as the Security Council remains actively seized of the matter.

In addition, the resolution before us is deeply flawed and flagrantly one-sided. It makes no mention that Hamas and its terrorist cronies launched thousands of rockets and mortars at one million Israeli civilians. It makes no mention that Hamas uses schools, hospitals, mosques and civilians' homes to hide

weapons and launch attacks. It makes no mention of Hamas's enormous efforts to smuggle sophisticated arms into the Gaza Strip. These and other omissions make this resolution irrelevant, as it clings to a distorted reality.

Sadly, there is an ever-widening gap between what happens in the real world and the reaction here, on First Avenue. This is a deeply troubling discrepancy which calls into question the relevance of our work and the effectiveness of our response. While this body considers a resolution steeped in prejudice, Israel and many others in the region are actively engaged in seeking to bring about conditions on the ground that will enable a solution.

While many in this Hall find great satisfaction in empty denunciations, true progress is made on the ground. Terrorism is a destructive, evil plague. Fighting terrorism is a value enshrined by the United Nations and the entire international community. As such, Israel expects support against the relentless terrorist onslaught of Hamas and other groups. If the General Assembly truly desires to unite for peace, and not only in name, let us unite for peace and unite against terrorism.

For that reason I just stated, we find the resolution before us procedurally and substantively flawed, and that is why we voted against it.

Mr. McNee (Canada): Canada continues to call for an immediate, sustainable and durable ceasefire. We support this resolution's call for compliance with Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) as a means to achieve such a ceasefire. However, Canada regrets that the resolution fails clearly to recognize that rocket attacks by Hamas led to the current crisis. The rocket attacks must stop. For this reason, Canada abstained in the vote on the resolution.

Mr. Palouš (Czech Republic): I speak on behalf of the European Union (EU).

The European Union has tonight voted in favour of the resolution supporting an immediate ceasefire in accordance with Security Council resolution 1860 (2009). The European Union notes that the resolution we have just adopted does not contain explicit reference to the issue of illegal arms smuggling and underlines that for a sustainable solution, this issue will need to be addressed. The EU stands ready to contribute to efforts in that regard.

Mr. Wolff (United States of America): As we stated earlier today, the United States is deeply concerned about the situation in Gaza and southern Israel. This is a very serious matter, which is now best dealt with through active diplomatic efforts on the ground, including the Egyptian initiative.

The basic elements for a durable ceasefire have been laid out. The United Nations has spoken through Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), and the Secretary-General is in the region right now, working to find a solution and ensure the resolution's implementation.

Other initiatives that complement and support these efforts are in play as well, including the memorandum of understanding regarding the prevention of the supply of arms and related materials to terrorist groups, signed today in Washington, D.C., between the United States and Israel. That is an effort to end the direct cause of the current hostilities: the flow of weapons and explosives into Gaza.

A separate General Assembly resolution is neither necessary nor helpful — and certainly not an unbalanced one that is silent on the issue of Hamas rocket attacks. All efforts should be focused on the real work of implementing Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) in the region, so that we can then turn again back to the goals of Security Council resolution 1850 (2008) — that is, a lasting peace based on an enduring commitment to mutual recognition, freedom from violence, incitement and terror and the two-State solution, building upon previous agreements and obligations.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic): Allow me, first of all, Mr. President, to commend your noble efforts and your noble mission. I think you have conducted our tough deliberations with a very strong faith in justice. If there is a mistake in the outcome of our deliberations, it is not yours.

I think that the main reason for calling for and convening the resumption of this urgent session was that we wanted to handle the paralysis created by the Security Council in dealing with the suffering of the Palestinian people. Unfortunately, here we are, deforming the purpose of the convocation of this session. Here we are, repeating the same inertia from which the Security Council suffers. The Council adopted its resolution 1860 (2009) without providing it with any teeth or any mechanism of enforcement.

The majority that voted in favour of today's draft resolution is not the one that the Palestinian people in Gaza need. This majority is not the one that the representative of Palestine called for before we proceeded to the vote. This majority is not the one we were all aspiring to get after these tough deliberations, wishing to render service — a minor service — to the Palestinian people suffering in Gaza from the aggressive Israeli bloodshed.

The sponsors of the draft resolution were acting on the basis of good faith when they decided to go back to the plenary and bow to your request, Mr. President, that we find a compromise for the sake of helping the Palestinian people. Unfortunately, we found ourselves before the machinery of procedural manipulation, and the masters of that machinery were not acting, as we were, on the basis of good faith.

All of that resulted in a vote on something related to the suffering of the Palestinian people. That is not what the Palestinian people in Gaza were waiting for. That is not rendering a service to the Palestinian people in Gaza. That is precisely serving the Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people in Gaza. We have just deformed the meaningful concept of the Charter — what we call "international legitimacy".

The representative of Israel has shamefully criticized the resolution minutes after its adoption. Everyone here heard what that representative said. Some people may think that they achieved a victory tonight. This victory is not good for the Palestinian people in Gaza. This victory is a repetition of the paralysis of the Security Council, which runs against the main conception of holding our session.

Those who voted in favour of this important resolution have done so thinking that they would render a service and that they would be able to stop this aggressive Israeli machinery. But they have not done so, I am sorry to say. Lamentably, Israel will neglect and duck this resolution, as they have always done. You, my colleagues, have given them just enough time to finish their dirty job against the Palestinian people in Gaza.

My delegation was led, in spite of itself, to abstain from voting on a draft resolution that we think is incapable by nature of helping the Palestinian people in Gaza, the Palestinian people who need real help from us, real assistance — not literature, not poetry.

Ms. Espinosa (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): First, allow me to thank you, Mr. President, for your patience, for your commitment and for your guidance and direction in this complex process. I agree with my colleague from Syria that acting in good faith sometimes seems not to produce anything in this Organization.

I would like to explain the vote of Ecuador. We abstained in the voting on this resolution. That seems to go against the statement I made this morning on behalf of the Government and the people of Ecuador in this very room. Why did we abstain? We abstained simply because we cannot understand how the States Members of the United Nations could not agree with the immediate withdrawal of Israeli military forces from the territory of Gaza.

We are also truly surprised by the third preambular paragraph of the draft resolution that we have just massively approved. In the third preambular paragraph, we are putting the Israeli victims — eight or nine in number, perhaps — on the same level as the Palestinian victims, who number more than 5,000 dead and wounded, most of them, we know, civilians, women and children — innocent victims. That is what the third preambular paragraph says, and a majority of us in this room have just voted for it.

Since procedural formulas seemed to be used as a shelter, I agree with a colleague who spoke before me about the problem of procedure. The representatives of Egypt and the European Union indicated that the proposal we voted on this afternoon was virtually identical to the original proposal presented, so procedure would have called for voting paragraph by paragraph. I do not know what would have happened if the Members of this Organization had had to vote on the third preambular paragraph.

My delegation would have liked votes on the paragraphs that were amendments in this draft resolution that was almost identical to the original text. I simply want to make this comment and place on record the issue of procedure.

I would finally like to recall that, the people of Ecuador are here, and it took the position it took this afternoon because one essential thing matters to us: the well-being and the preservation of the lives of the Palestinian people. We regret having had to abstain, because everybody knows the position of my Government, my country and my people.

Now that I have made that clear, Mr. President, I would like to thank you once again for your patience, guidance and direction, and I would like to regret once again, as I said, that after my delegation acted in good faith, trying to return to the original proposal, that was absolutely ignored by the other side. I regret that, and I reaffirm our unconditional solidarity with the Palestinian people.

Mr. Hill (Australia): I wanted to take the floor in explanation of vote, as we abstained. I would explain that that abstention should not be misinterpreted.

We strongly support the call in Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) for an immediate, durable and fully respected ceasefire. We recognize that this conflict is profoundly affecting civilians and that it is vital that diplomatic efforts to find a resolution that effects a durable ceasefire succeed, and succeed very soon. We believe that all parties should avoid actions that could result in unnecessary or increased suffering on the part of innocent civilians.

While we believe that the draft resolution that we voted upon was an improvement upon that which was circulated yesterday, we still did not believe in the end that it went far enough, because to achieve a durable, sustainable ceasefire, actions need to be taken that do not appear in the document that we voted upon. In particular, to achieve that sustainable ceasefire, rocket attacks against Israel must cease, and the smuggling of arms into Gaza also must end.

If that had been included, and if we were genuinely seeking to take the debate one step beyond that which we have had to date in looking at what is necessary to achieve that longer-term and durable ceasefire, we would have been able to support the resolution.

In conclusion, I also wanted to say that we are disturbed by the suggestions of some in this debate that through this debate success will be achieved in isolating Israel. Isolating Israel is not a path to peace. Peace must be made between the parties. Our efforts must be to bring the parties together to achieve that peace.

This conflict has demonstrated once again the vital need for a two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Australia remains strongly committed to that objective and urges all efforts towards it.

Mr. Natalegawa (Indonesia): The Palestinian cause is an Indonesian cause as well. In fact, for many Indonesians, myself included, to be Indonesian is to be Palestinian. Therefore it is with an extremely heavy heart that today, probably for the first time, Indonesia has not been able to join the consensus and has not been able to support a General Assembly resolution on this issue. Our universal Assembly has historically always supported the Palestinian cause, and Indonesia has never failed to either sponsor or initiate such resolutions and, of course, to support the Palestinian cause.

It becomes even more galling for us to find ourselves in a situation where we are not able to support this resolution because Indonesia was one of the main proponents for the convening of this emergency special session. Therefore we feel it is incumbent upon us to explain in some way why we find ourselves in this situation of not being able to support the resolution that has just been adopted, and therefore to most clearly express our support for our Palestinian brothers and sisters.

There are moments when we here, working in the United Nations and the General Assembly, have to place our moral conscience above anything else. We have seen your draft resolution, Sir, and we stated on the first day of our debate that we need more than simple reaffirmations of existing Security Council resolutions. Rather, we must build on Council resolutions. However, out of our greatest respect for the presidency of the Assembly, we resisted the temptation to add to the resolution in a way that would make it easier for us to be able to support it. We did so out of our respect for the presidency and our wish to have a consensus.

However, at a late hour, we were presented with certain amendments, which, I fully understand, had been worked out extremely diligently by our friends and brothers in the European Union. But with the greatest humility and the greatest conscience, my delegation would have tremendous difficulty explaining — not to ourselves or to our colleagues in this room, but to our people back home — how it is that we are not able, as the Assembly — not the Security Council, but the Assembly of 190-odd Member States — to explicitly say to Israel, the occupying Power: enough is enough, end your violence and leave Gaza now.

That is why we are troubled by this amendment to your text, Sir. In the third preambular paragraph of the new text in L.21/Rev.1, we find ourselves, the General Assembly, incapable of even identifying who the main perpetrator of this whole situation is, namely Israel. Of course, every life lost is one life too many. It goes without saying that one civilian life is not more important than another civilian life. We condemn and feel saddened by every civilian life lost, whether Palestinian or Israeli. But to suggest that there is some kind of parity — that, we find difficult to accept, with the greatest humility.

I know that we in this Assembly always seek balance and compromise, but there are moments — and this is one such moment — in which we find ourselves unable to have that kind of conscience. We felt that tonight was the time for us to say loud and clear: as our colleague has said, this is not the Security Council; this is the General Assembly of the United Nations.

As a democratic nation, we are accountable to our public back home, not simply in this room. We can say that we are not able to support this resolution, not because we are not in support of Palestine. On the contrary, we are so fully 110 per cent in support of Palestine that we feel that this resolution does not go far enough in condemning Israel and demanding that Israel immediately withdraw from occupied Palestinian territory. That is why I would like to make it absolutely clear that, in fact, by abstaining today, we are showing more than ever before that our solidarity is 110 per cent and totally with the Palestinian people and with the suffering that they are going through, and that we demand not a day too soon that the Israelis withdraw from the Gaza Strip and end the carnage now.

Mr. Loayza Barea (Bolivia) (spoke in Spanish): First of all, Mr. President, I would like to express, on behalf of my delegation, our respect for your commitment to the cause of the Palestinian people. We have listened to your vehement call at the reconvening of this session of the General Assembly. When we became aware of the text of the draft resolution that you submitted to the members, we made it clear in several statements that this text unequivocally reflected the sentiments of the international community.

Of course, Bolivia would have supported the proposal made by Ecuador, with the revision included, because it definitely enriched the text and made it

effectively call for the occupying Power to withdraw immediately from the Gaza Strip.

In any case, a resolution has been adopted. Bolivia voted in favour of it not because of issues reflected or that are the result of a procedural matter, which I hope we will all be able to understand someday, especially those who are suffering the most at this time. We voted for it because we believe that the cause of peace comes first, before any other consideration and because the Assembly has the unavoidable duty to speak out as many times as may be necessary. We believe that this resolution should not be interpreted as something that will not open the way for other resolutions. On the contrary, we believe that ground has been broken and that steps are being taken towards greater prospects.

We wish to express in particular, with absolute clarity, our condemnation of the aggressor Power. We have therefore broken off diplomatic relations with it. Above all, we wish to reiterate our greatest solidarity with the cause of the Palestinian people.

Mr. Urbina (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Costa Rica voted in favour of resolution ES-10/18 adopted by the General Assembly this evening. Costa Rica voted in favour because we believe that it responds to the most urgent aspects of the dire situation in the Gaza Strip. However, we regret the fact that the text does not mention Hamas's share of responsibility in the deterioration of the political situation and crisis in Gaza. We also sought an explicit condemnation of acts of terrorism perpetrated for some time by some Palestinian extremists against the territory and civilian population of Israel.

Costa Rica has already established diplomatic relations with the Palestinian State, which has the right to exist and live in peace side by side with Israel within internationally recognized borders.

Mr. Valero Briceño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We would like to specify that our delegation abstained from voting on the proposal submitted by the Egyptian delegation for only one reason, or more specifically, for one fundamental reason. We would have liked for the text of the resolution to specifically condemn, as did the proposal submitted by the Ecuadorian delegation, the Israeli occupation of the territory of Gaza, and to demand, in line with our beliefs and the appeals of the international community, the withdrawal of Israeli

forces from the Gaza Strip. My country, Venezuela, believed that this point could have been accepted at least by the large majority of delegations from Arab countries.

I have in my hands a cable, a news wire issued in Qatar by the news agency Al-Jazeera, which records a meeting held yesterday by the high authorities of countries of the Arab League. According to the wire, that major high-level meeting, which was even attended by Heads of State, approved, "a strong condemnation of Israel, and calls on Israel to withdraw from the Gaza Strip".

Venezuela believed in good faith that this matter would be welcomed by most delegations represented in this forum. We were convinced, as a matter of fact, that only Israel, the occupying Power, and its closest allies would object to it. It seemed unthinkable, however, that delegations of countries of the Arab League could disagree with the fact that we had to call for an immediate withdrawal of Israel from the occupied Palestinian territories.

We do not understand — and it pains me to say this — why that demand, which, I repeat, was overwhelmingly supported by the international community, especially the Arab-Islamic world, was not adopted by the majority of members at this meeting. Given those circumstances, my delegation reiterates its unwavering support for the Palestinian people, their self-determination and their will to attain a free, independent and sovereign country guided by self-determination. You can be certain, Mr. President, that Venezuela will continue to act in solidarity with the Palestinian people and its cause, which is also the cause of the people of Venezuela.

For that very reason, although we would have liked the draft resolution submitted by the Ecuadorian delegation to address other matters, we think the document submitted by our President, who deserves our deepest respect, essentially reflected the majority sentiment in this forum. The only amendment, presented by the Ecuadorian delegation with the support and sponsorship of Venezuela, among others, was the demand that the occupying Power, Israel, withdraw immediately from the Gaza Strip. Resolution ES-10/18 does not address that issue, which we feel to be essential because it will not be possible to attain lasting peace in the Middle East while the occupying Power remains entrenched and committing its crimes

of genocide and against humanity. Therefore, and with great pain, we abstained for the reasons just mentioned.

We are certain that the Palestinian people, the Arab peoples and the peoples of the world share the sentiment that the occupying Power, Israel, must withdraw from the Gaza Strip. In that regard, we reiterate that the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela abstained from supporting the resolution for the above reasons alone.

The President: Before proceeding further, I would like to announce that those delegations whose votes have not been accurately reflected on the board are now invited to approach the Secretariat at the voting table to inform it of their intended vote.

We are about to close the list of speakers now.

Mr. Belkheir (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): We pay tribute to your humanity and your nobility, Mr. President, as well as to your efforts to support the just cause of people who have been killed and had their land occupied. We have felt that sentiment fully reflected, Sir, in your statements and in your very courageous stand and your voice, which has been resounding since the first day.

My country voted in favour of resolution ES-10/18. However, we would have liked to see it more firm and more in line with the disaster on the ground and the killing of the Palestinian people in Gaza. However, we realize that it is difficult to do more than that while maintaining the equilibrium of the international order within the Organization. We are aware of that fact. Nonetheless, this minimal resolution is acceptable to my country.

Ms. Ziade (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): We express our deep appreciation for the efforts you have personally undertaken, Mr. President, to encourage the General Assembly to adopt resolution ES-10/18 in order to express solidarity with the Palestinian people and to condemn the illegal Israeli actions in the Gaza Strip, particularly and more generally on Palestinian occupied lands.

Like many other delegations, we would have preferred more robust language condemning the Israeli aggression in the Gaza Strip and calling for an unconditional withdrawal by Israel from the Gaza Strip. However, in response to the appeal made by the brotherly Palestinian delegation, we chose to vote in favour of the resolution. We did so because it was

supported by the greatest possible number of Member States and in order to ensure that it would accompany the diplomatic efforts and initiatives under way in the region to achieve an immediate ceasefire and an immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt): I requested the floor to express to you, Mr. President, our sincere appreciation and thanks for your swift action after Israel launched its aggression against Gaza. Your decision to reconvene the tenth emergency special session at the end of last week — perhaps on the very day that Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) was adopted — greatly facilitated the adoption of that resolution. Your tireless efforts also resulted in the draft resolution that we, the representative of Palestine and all other representatives here used as a basis for the resolution that we have adopted today.

In that regard, I would also like to thank all those who voted in favour of the resolution and even those who abstained, and to express my sincere appreciation for my neighbour the representative of Ecuador and the other sponsors. All of us are in the same boat and have had the same goal. This resolution is not a victory by some over others; it is a victory for all of us.

I would just like to address a number of points that have been made about the resolution. With regard to the third preambular paragraph, it is very clear in expressing grave concern about the developments on the ground since the adoption of resolution 1860 (2009). In no way does it equate the aggressor and the victims, because it states, “especially following the intensified military operations in the Gaza Strip” — which are not intensified military operations carried out by the Palestinian people against themselves in the Gaza Strip — “causing heavy casualties among civilians, including children and women” — and here comes a very important issue — “and the shelling of United Nations headquarters, hospitals, media premises and public infrastructure”. The Palestinians did not shell hospitals, media premises or United Nations headquarters. It is quite clear from the language of the resolution exactly who is being addressed. The last sentence of this paragraph, which comes from resolution 1860 (2009) itself, had to be preserved in order to maintain the required balance.

Those who say we are opposed to the withdrawal of the forces from Gaza should look at operative

paragraph 1, which uses the word "demands". The Security Council resolution uses the phrase "stresses the urgency of and calls for". Demanding something is very different from calling for something.

In that connection, what is being called for is a ceasefire. In order to reach the stage of a full withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip, we must first have a ceasefire. How can we ask forces to withdraw if we do not have a ceasefire? We are working on many fronts in that regard. As everyone here is aware, Egypt is working tirelessly day and night on negotiations between the two sides, and we are getting very close. I am sure that this will be followed by a withdrawal of forces from Gaza.

Egypt, like many Heads of State and Government of the Arab world, did not attend the conference held for leaders yesterday, because there was no quorum for the meeting. However, it was attended by other leaders from outside the Arab world and even by the representatives of some factions. I have not committed myself to any statement arising from that meeting, because I did not attend it. It was a very important meeting attended by very distinguished persons; but we were not a party to it. So I regret to respond to my colleague and friend the representative of Venezuela that what took place yesterday was not an Arab summit

conference, but side consultations among Heads of State and Government, eminent personalities, a number of others from outside the Arab world and representatives of factions of the Palestinian people known to all those here. They were consultations on what is to be done.

Therefore, let us concentrate on what needs to be done on the ground. The issue here is not whether to adopt a resolution by the Security Council or the General Assembly. Let us concentrate on regional and international efforts to put everything in perspective and achieve a ceasefire first and then, immediately after that, a withdrawal.

The President: I know we are all tired. I thank everyone for sticking it out. But I also would be less than frank if I did not say that, in addition to being very tired, I am very sad and disappointed. We are in far worse shape than I thought. Our brother from Egypt said we are all in the same boat, and that is for sure. We are all in the same boat, but we will never make it if we do not act in a more decisive and affirmative manner.

In accordance with the terms of paragraph 6 of resolution ES-10/18, the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 9.50 p.m.

